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D. DAWSON-WALKER, M.A., D.D.

A DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARY

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AND

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A DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARY
Edited by the Rev. C. H. IRWIN, D.D.

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

AND

THE EPISTLE TO TITUS

By the
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LONDON
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TO THE MEMORY
OF
MY FATHER

MADE IN GREAT BRITAIN
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PREFACE

Perhaps the only thing that needs to be said by way of preface to the following pages is to define clearly their scope and aim. They are not intended to be a further contribution to the growing mass of literature on St. Paul's Epistles; their object is the more modest one of making available for the "general," but "devout," reader some of the help which great scholars have given.

The writer has had in view throughout the English student who knows neither Greek nor German but is competent to read with attentive care the Authorised and Revised Versions of our English Bible. It is hoped that such exposition as is given here of St. Paul's words and the circumstances in which he wrote them, may serve to make them more intelligible to the mind, and so more convincing to the heart, of the present-day reader.

It has not been thought necessary to prefix extended bibliographies, and it may suffice to say that any one who wishes to help his fellow Christians to a better understanding of the Epistle to

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the *Colossians* will recall with special gratitude his dependence on Lightfoot, T. K. Abbott, Peake, Moule, and Maclaren; while *Titus* along with the other Pastoral Epistles has been the subject of quite recent investigation. To this task Cambridge and Oxford have made their respective contributions, in the editions of *The Pastoral Epistles* by Dr. St. John Parry (*Cambridge Press*) and Dr. Lock (*International Critical Commentary*). Each of these works represents the characteristic scholarship of the University from which it comes, and the writer of the following pages has tried to learn from each in order that he might be the better able to help others.

EDITORIAL NOTE

The extracts from the Revised Version contained in this volume are printed by permission of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, but all editorial responsibility rests with the Editor of the present volume. The Revisers' alternative renderings are not included in the text.

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ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE
TO
THE COLOSSIANS

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

I

INTRODUCTION

It would not be in harmony with the general aim of the series to which this commentary belongs, to attempt any exhaustive discussion of preliminary "critical" problems. There is the less need for this because competent scholarly opinion seems to be arriving at a large measure of agreement about points over which controversy has raged. In these circumstances the general reader will, rightly, be content to note the results of discussion, and will not wish to investigate minutely the processes by which the results have been reached.

If, for example, we continue to maintain the time-honoured view that *Colossians* is a genuine writing of St. Paul's, we are supported by the preponderating weight of ancient and modern critical opinion. This opinion has not been lightly and easily reached. It has been formed after a most exhaustive examination of the contents and of the linguistic character

of the Epistle, touching both its vocabulary and its style. A glance at Dr. Moffatt's list of those who support the Pauline authorship in his *Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament* will amply justify us in accepting this Epistle with confidence as the work of St. Paul. It is also obvious, and a matter of general agreement, that he was in prison when he wrote it. But opinions differ as to the place of his imprisonment. The older view, to which the majority of English scholars still assent, is that he wrote it from captivity in Rome. A more recent view, held mainly, though not exclusively, by German scholars, is that he wrote it during his two years' imprisonment at Cæsarea. More recently still, an interesting and ingeniously supported case has been made out for Ephesus as the place of writing.

Only an extended presentment and discussion of the conflicting arguments could do them any sufficient justice. It must suffice here, to say that so far as *Colossians* is concerned, the considerations in favour of Rome still seem to outweigh those in favour of either Cæsarea or Ephesus, and that the Epistle was most probably written in the earlier days of the Roman captivity. According to the chronology of St. Paul's life now generally accepted, this would be about the year A.D. 59.

The Church of Colossæ to which the Epistle was sent was not one of those founded directly by St. Paul himself. Its formation was one of the outlying results of his missionary labours at Ephesus. The references in the Epistle to Epaphras seem to

imply that he was a native of Colossæ, and that he, as St. Paul's convert and representative, had carried the message of the gospel to his fellow townsmen.

Colossæ was situated in the upper part of the valley of the River Lycus, and probably owed such importance as it had to its position on the great high-road that, here, ran eastward from Ephesus across Asia Minor towards the Euphrates. About eleven miles to the westward, in the lower part of the Lycus valley, was Laodicea, also on the high-road, with Hierapolis over against it, some six miles to the northward. There were Christian communities in each of these three towns when St. Paul wrote his letter to Colossæ.

What knowledge we have of the Colossian Church is derived entirely from the Epistle itself. Some passages in it seem to be addressed more directly to Christians of Gentile origin. On the other hand, there must have been a considerable admixture of Jews, for Jewish elements loom largely in the erroneous teaching which had gained a footing in their midst. We know, too, that since the days of Antiochus the Great, the residence of the Jews in Asia Minor had been encouraged, and that Laodicea was one of the most important cities of the Dispersion in that region.

A fuller account of the false teaching by which the Colossian Church was disturbed will be given in our reading of the Epistle. It may suffice to say here that it was probably to a great extent Jewish, both in its origin and character, with an admixture of elements from that speculative Orientalism with

which the Judaism of the Dispersion, in the first century, came in contact. The blending of these two influences seems adequately to account for all St. Paul's language in the Epistle.

It was the prevalence of this erroneous teaching that occasioned the writing of the Epistle. During the years that had elapsed between St. Paul's missionary work at Ephesus and his arrival in Rome as a prisoner, Christianity seems to have made considerable progress at Colossæ. Certain teachers, however, had put forth doctrines which caused the greatest disquiet to Epaphras. He felt that St. Paul's experience and wisdom alone could grapple with the situation; so he journeyed to Rome in search of comfort and advice. The Apostle realised the gravity of the crisis, and despatched to the Church a letter in which are set forth the great fundamental truths that counteract the error.

Epaphras appears to have remained in Rome, sharing, either by necessity or choice, in St. Paul's imprisonment. The letter was carried to Colossæ by Tychicus, himself an Asiatic, who was accompanied by Onesimus, the fugitive slave, now returning to his master Philemon. With the letter to Colossæ, Tychicus carried also the encyclical letter, known to us as *Ephesians*, along with the private note to Philemon commending Onesimus to his master's kindly care.

II

THE GREETING

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colossae : Grace to you and peace from God our Father.—Col. i. 1–2.

Col. i. 1–2. The Greeting.

These opening words make it quite clear to us that in reading *Colossians* we are reading a letter. They reproduce the usual epistolary forms of the age. It was customary in beginning a letter to mention the name of the sender, followed by that of the recipients, with a word of greeting from the one to the other. The letter of Claudius Lysias to Felix, quoted in Acts xxiii. 26–30, is an interesting example of the general form ; while the opening words of the Epistle of St. James exhibit most clearly the employment of this form in a distinctively Christian letter.

St. Paul's extant letters conform generally to the same type. There are variations in detail, arising from the particular circumstances in which he wrote, or his mood at the time of writing. But it is his general practice, as here, to mention himself as the sender of the letter, along with those who are associated with him in the sending of it ; to designate the recipients in shorter or longer terms ;

Col. i. 1–2.

and then to greet them with a warm-hearted and distinctively Christian salutation.

"An Apostle."

The words he applies to himself are very characteristic: **An Apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God**. They are authoritative, and, at the same time, very humble. It may be that as he was personally unknown to the Colossians, he justified by a reference to his Apostleship his right to interpose in the affairs of their Church. His authority to do so was on a footing of equality with that of the original Apostles. Like them, he had seen the Risen Lord and could bear the testimony of personal experience to the reality of His Resurrection. Like them, he was an **apostle**; not merely a messenger, but an accredited envoy, commissioned to speak for, and to represent, his Master. The words that he will speak to the Colossians have all the weight that belongs to such an envoy.

It is by **the will of God** that this charge has been laid upon him. These words continue the assertion of authority, but they, at the same time, strike the note of humility. The position he holds does not depend on human appointment; it is the result of God's direct call. God has made him what he is. So far as man's intervention or authorisation goes, he is in a position of total independence. In relation to God the matter is different; there, his position is one of absolute dependence. He claims neither merit, nor position, nor power. He is simply the instrument in God's hands to carry out God's will. The Colossians must listen with respect to his words, not because they are his, but because

they are God's words spoken through him. He speaks to them as **an Apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God.** Col. i. 1–2.

The association of the name of his young disciple Timothy with his own is a mark of the Apostle's kindliness and Christian courtesy. An older man dealing authoritatively with matters of grave import might, not unnaturally, omit any reference to a subordinate helper. Such omission, however, was not St. Paul's way. Timothy might not add any apostolic authority; he was simply **the brother.** But he was St. Paul's beloved friend and helper, accompanying him and supporting him in the furtherance of his evangelistic work. The Colossians, therefore, are invited to remember him and to respect him as the Apostle's trusty colleague.

"Saints."

Having indicated, with some fulness, the senders of the letter, St. Paul goes on to mention those to whom it is sent. He speaks of them as **the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colossæ.**

The first of these terms, the word "saints," deserves a little careful study, all the more so because in modern usage it has come to be diverted somewhat from its original meaning. It should be noted, in the first place, that St. Paul applies it to all the members of the Colossian Church. It was, evidently, on his lips, not the designation of a rare and select few. To employ the word in this latter way is rather the mark of later ecclesiasticism, often with more particular reference to outstanding examples of cloistered or ascetic sanctity. But St. Paul applies it to any member of the Colossian

Col. i. 1–2.

community; one and all, they are **saints.** It should be remembered, too,—for the case is even still more striking,—that, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul describes the members of that Church as "saints"; although he goes on, in the same letter, to rebuke them for exceedingly grave offences. What, then, is the precise meaning of the word which the Apostle can use in this inclusive way?

The word is an Old Testament one, and its root idea is that of "separation" to God. From one point of view it serves to designate Christians as the new "Israel" because they are separated from the world and consecrated to God as was Israel of old. The essential idea is that of belonging exclusively to God. The further ideas of purity and moral excellence are secondary and derivative. The word indicates, primarily, the Christian's position; then, the obligation attached to that position. One who belongs to God ought to be like God in character and conduct.

When the implications of the word are drawn out, they are seen to be both comforting and inspiring. It is comforting to the Christian to know that he belongs to God; that God will not neglect or forget him; that God's omnipotence is exercised to keep him from what is evil and harmful; "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee." It is also inspiring to the Christian to know that because he is a Christian he must be nothing less than a saint. The Christian is one who surrenders his will to God in practical obedience.

Sainthood is not the mark of the exalted few; it is the badge of the lowliest Christian who submits himself to the constraining love of Christ. "We love, because He first loved us." **Col. i. 1–2.**

St. Paul is not content simply to describe the readers of his letter as **saints.** He adds the further description, "faithful brethren in Christ." There is some ambiguity about the Greek word that has been translated in our A.V. and R.V. by the word "faithful." It may mean either "trustworthy" or "trustful." There are certain passages in which it obviously means "steadfast," "reliable." There are others in which it quite clearly means "believing." Either meaning would give a good sense here, and critical opinion is divided. Some hold that St. Paul would have us understand that when he speaks of the Colossian Christians as **saints** he limits the term to those who are true and steadfast members of the community, in contrast to those who have been shaken in their allegiance, or have actually fallen away. Others hold that the word is to be taken in its active sense as implying that belief in Christ, the resting on Him in faith, is the foundation of all Christian sanctity and all Christian brotherhood. This would certainly seem to be the fundamental meaning of the word here, though it brings the other meaning in its train. It is only the Christian whose faith is consciously and actively reposed on Christ who is the true and trusty member of the Christian community. **"Faithful."**

Whatever be the precise shade of meaning of the word **faithful,** there is no doubt at all about the **Brothers in Christ.**

Col. i. 1–2.

word that it accompanies. Christians are pre-eminently **brothers.** The contemporary world was one intersected by deep lines of cleavage. Racial divisions were sharply drawn. In social life men and women, cultured and unlearned, freemen and slaves, stood widely apart. Efforts, indeed, were not wanting, to draw together these separated sections on some ground of common humanity. Guilds and confraternities for various purposes existed. The Roman Empire aimed at imposing a formal unity on the world.

Into this world, so riven and distracted, came One Who proclaimed the message of brotherhood, not as a pleasing metaphor, or as a sentimental ideal, but as a fundamental truth based on the Fatherhood of God. We are **brothers** because we have one Father, and so because we share one common life. The Father is the Father revealed to us by the Son Jesus Christ, and the common life is that new life into which the believing Christian is "born again." The idea of Christian brotherhood involves, of necessity, the idea of regeneration.

In this respect, as in others, Christianity is God's answer to man's cry. The idealist's dream of human brotherhood will never be realised on any other condition than this, the imparting of new life by Him Who is "the first-born among many brethren."

The final element in the description of these **saints and faithful brethren** is that they are **in Christ.** Here we touch the bed rock of all St. Paul's life, of all his most characteristic teaching. That

there is a mystical yet most real union of life between the Christian and his Lord was the fundamental fact in his experience. Words do not easily express all that this experience means. We want to convey the idea of mutual indwelling. We are **in Christ.** He, too, is in us. No figure can convey to us the fulness of meaning which the phrase implies more richly than that used by Jesus Himself in the Upper Room; that of the Vine and the Branches. "He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from Me ye can do nothing." St. Paul, in *Ephesians*, adds the further figure of the Head and the body: he prays that we "may grow up in all things into Him, which is the Head, even Christ; from Whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love." Christ, it may reverently be said, is, to the Christian, as the air is to our physical bodies. We must be in it; it is necessary for our very life that we should be in it. It, too, must be in us; our lungs must be filled by its ever-renewed freshness if we are to live at all. For the individual and for the Church the secret of life is to be **in Christ.**

Col. i. 1–2.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father. **Grace . . .** and **Peace.** This is a distinctively Christian form of greeting, possibly devised by St. Paul himself. It is generally regarded as combining the Gentile form of salutation mentioned on page 17 with the Jewish greeting "Peace."

"Grace."

Col. i. 1–2.

The Greek word for **grace** (*charis*) is derived from the same root as the word for "greeting" (*chairein*), but the connection between them in respect of meaning is very slender. The word occupies such a prominent place in Christian experience, thought, and literature that no attempt can be made here to give an exhaustive account of its history. It was widely used in Greek literature with the meanings both of "graciousness" and "gracefulness." The former of these meanings made it a very suitable word to be employed by the translators of the Old Testament into Greek, as the rendering for a Hebrew word signifying generally a gracious attitude on the part of a superior to an inferior, and, more particularly, God's attitude of favour to man, with the consequent blessed condition of human life resulting from the Divine favour.

With this wealth of associations, it lay ready to hand for use by the first Christian teachers and writers. St. Paul was the one of these who seems most to have explored its richness. He certainly did more than any other to develop it as a theological term. For him it expressed God's patient, kindly love towards man, expressed supremely by the gift of His own Son. It expressed, too, the quite unmerited character of this free love. It further expressed the wealth of gifts which God bestowed with and through His Son. Finally, it expressed the position of privilege and the graces of character that resulted from these gracious gifts.

A tendency has sometimes betrayed itself in the history of Christian thought, to construe the word

in an institutional fashion, with the corresponding risk of a too mechanical conception. The corrective to this is, never to forget that fundamentally the word implies a *personal* relationship, the gracious helping attitude of a person to a person. To lose sight of this is to take the very heart out of all that it conveyed to St. Paul. **Col. i. 1–2.**

The Hebrew greeting, **Peace,** may retain a reminiscence of far-off days when fierce fighting was the constant accompaniment of life. It came later to express the object for which a heart disquieted and unrestful must yearn. It is not a matter of accident that St. Paul puts it, in order, after "grace." So far as it means harmony with God and rest in God it is the supreme *desideratum;* but it only comes as the outcome of the Divine grace. "Our heart is restless till it find rest in Thee." "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." "Being therefore justified by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." **"Peace."**

This grace, and its accompanying peace, both of which are for those who are "in Christ," both of which the Father, in His love, bestows, St. Paul desires for those who, at Colossæ, are **in Christ.** So will their welfare be secured, however the seductive wiles of erroneous teachings may charm them, however sharply temptations to wrong-doing may assault them. For peace itself is a powerful and invincible garrison within the heart. As he told his friends at Philippi: "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus."

III

ST. PAUL'S JOY AT THE PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL

We give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have toward all the saints, because of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which is come unto you; even as it is also in all the world, bearing fruit and increasing as it doth in you also, since the day ye heard and knew the grace of God in truth; even as ye learned of Epaphras our beloved fellow-servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.—COL. I. 3–8.

Col. i. 3–8.

Thanks for the progress of the gospel at Colossæ.

WE have, in these words, another instance of St. Paul's usage of the epistolary forms of his age. Researches among the papyri have made it abundantly clear that it was customary to open out letters with an expression of thanks to God for some benefit conferred on the writer or his readers. It was a beautiful secular custom, very congenial to St. Paul's religious and kindly temperament, as his constant employment of it shows.

Here, as in other cases, he thanks God for all that is praiseworthy in those to whom he writes. St. Paul was not only kindly but very sagacious. The main purpose of his letter to Colossæ was to

utter words of warning and reproof. He knew, however, that the Colossians had their good points. On these he delighted to dwell with affectionate emphasis. He also knew that reproof is always more likely to be taken patiently when accompanied by a word of praise. Unqualified condemnation will not infrequently evoke an attitude of sullen and stubborn resistance, or, at the best, of hopeless discouragement. The warmth and sincerity of his praise would predispose his hearers to receive with attention and affection the gravity of his warning. Col. i. 3–8.

The sincerity of his praise, and its remoteness from anything like interested flattery, is evidenced by the fact that it is expressed as thanksgiving to God. It is their faith and their love especially for which St. Paul is thankful, and the very mention of these virtues leads on to words which, we feel, are anticipatory of the warnings on which he is about to enter. This faith and love which he can so unreservedly praise are bound up with that gospel which they had once received, with which these later teachings, which they were finding so attractive, are so utterly inconsistent. The mention of the message—that original message of truth—suggests, too, the messenger. Epaphras is recalled to their notice, as St. Paul's accredited envoy; for they were in danger of deserting him for other teachers with what appeared to be a more attractive doctrine.

Clearly, then, in this paragraph, St. Paul has in view the errors against which he is going to warn his readers. In contrast with these, he dwells both on

Col. i. 3–8. the "truth of the gospel" which they had first received, and on the authorised and reliable teaching of the evangelist from whom they had received it. The fact that the Colossians, though inclined to welcome erroneous teaching, are still faithful and loving, emboldens him to take this stand.

Their faith. Their faith is **in Christ Jesus.** He is the sphere in which it moves; a faith that dwells "in Him" as its abiding place is a faith that is not only rightly directed but is ever strengthened and uplifted by Him in Whom it dwells. **Faith** as used by St. Paul here covers the whole of man's relation to God. It is the foundation on which all the Christian graces of life and conduct are built up, especially the **love . . . toward all the saints.**

Their love. The **love** of which he speaks here is not a general sentiment of philanthropy. It is the love of Christian for Christian. Faith in the same Saviour, loyalty to the same King, will, if they be genuine sentiments, beget a bond of loving union between those who share the loyalty and the faith. As age has succeeded to age of Christian history, the love of Christian for Christian has become the theme of ridicule and cynical comment, often with no lack of justification. So-called "wars of religion" have been frequent. The *odium theologicum* has come to stand for the bitterest form of hatred. The intrusion of other elements and the corresponding loss of touch with Christ have largely accounted for this. If our faith be really **in Him** it will issue in **love . . . toward all the saints.** The faith and love of which he speaks are **because of,** or, as Dr.

Moffatt translates it, "due to," **the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens.** It is a very shallow and unsympathetic criticism of St. Paul that finds in these words any idea of mercenary calculation, any thought of being good for the sake of what can be got out of it. The thought is, of course, eschatological. St. Paul looks on to the end; the end that will more than justify all the road that has led towards it. What is this "end"? A little later in the chapter he defines it as **glory.** The very treasure of the gospel is "Christ's presence among you as your hope of glory."

Col. i. 3–8. Their hope.

The splendour of the gospel for St. Paul lay in the fact that the Divine glory should be opened to all men, Gentiles as well as Jews. Christ's presence with them here, on earth, justified them in hoping that they would be with Him in glory. Their present fellowship in Him guaranteed the hope. "When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." The **glory** which the Christian may hope to share with Christ is deeper and fuller richness of life in Christ. If love looks forward, for its reward, simply to closer and more intimate communion with Him Who is loved, if service be rendered and suffering endured in the hope of God's loving "Well done" at the end, it is simply an abuse of language to say that an ulterior object is in view. The teaching of present-day philosophers who bid us view the world process teleologically, interpreting the successive stages in the light of the end, is drawing near to the standpoint of St. Paul. For him, Christ

Col. i. 3–8.

was not only the present source of true life, but also its crown and great reward.

It is **because of** this hope that Christian brotherhood and fellowship are possible now. In the Christian's hope of immortality there is nothing individual or selfish. It is a social and generous hope. The Christian looks forward to a time when he and his fellows shall share in the joy of richer life in Christ, and the hope he cherishes is the inspiration of the love he now displays.

The progress of the gospel.

It was in the gospel, the original gospel, first preached to them by Epaphras that the Colossians had been made aware of this glorious hope. The errors to which they had recently been listening had no such message to give them. In contrast with these local forms of error, St. Paul dwells on the vitality of the gospel and its universal appeal. It is **in all the world, bearing fruit and increasing.** He is not suggesting that a thing is true because many people believe it. What he does suggest is that heresies, in the nature of the case, are local and partial. Truth is essentially catholic. It is in virtue of its truth that the gospel wins men of every age and every nation. The Colossians must widen their outlook; they must estimate the special doctrines their local teachers are giving them in the light of this larger gospel truth.

The credential of the gospel is not only its wide appeal, but its vitality. It is continuously bearing fruit. The particular form of the Greek participle here has an intensive sense. It denotes the inward energy of the gospel. The other participle,

increasing, suggests the thought of external growth. The gospel, when it has borne its fruit, does not wither away. It not only produces fruit abundantly, but is always growing into larger life. Any system must ultimately be judged by its influence on human character and conduct. This is a test to which Christianity can, with confidence, submit.

Col. i. 3–8.

IV

GOD'S GIFT TO US IN CHRIST

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray and make request for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to the might of his glory, unto all patience and long-suffering with joy; giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love; in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.—Col. i. 9–14.

Col. i. 9–15.
His prayer for the Colossians.

It is not sufficient for St. Paul to be thankful for the good report he has had of the Colossians. His thankfulness moves him to prayer on their behalf. It has been said that the Apostle's intercessory prayers are the high-water mark of the epistles in which they occur. In this particular prayer he seems to soar to the loftiest heights of spiritual contemplation, passing from petition to an enraptured meditation on the all-sufficient greatness of his Lord.

It should be noted how the word **all** rings like a refrain throughout the prayer. The **wisdom,** the **power,** the **patience** that he desires on their behalf, he asks for in unlimited measure. He prays that

all the wealth of God's abundance may be made available for their need. **Col. i. 9–15.**

It is instructive to mark the order of St. Paul's petitions and the sequence of thought that they imply. To be filled with the knowledge of God's will is the primary thing, the root from which all else must spring. The word for **knowledge** is a favourite one with St. Paul, especially in his later epistles. It is a compound noun, which appears, in its compounded form, to convey a stronger meaning than the ordinary word for knowledge. Scholars have not been quite unanimous as to the precise shade of meaning which the strengthened form conveys. It may perhaps be said that the idea of concentration is uppermost. The knowledge of which the Apostle here speaks is a knowledge that grasps the object and penetrates to the heart of it. The object of this knowledge is **God's will ;** not, as the context shows, with general reference to abstract truth and speculative thought, but with more particular reference to the moral and practical—God's will for the conduct of our lives ; what He wants us to do, and what He wants us to be.

For knowledge of God's will

This knowledge involves, for those on whom it is bestowed, spiritual **wisdom** and **understanding.** The former of these words is more general in its character. It has reference to the whole range of mental faculties. **Understanding** is the special faculty of insight, the power to discriminate, to view things in their right relation one to the other. Both are **spiritual ;** they proceed from the

For wisdom.

For understanding.

Col. i. 9–15.

inspiration of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul emphasises this in order to mark the contrast with the false and specious wisdom by which the Colossians were in danger of being ensnared.

"To walk worthily."

It is a great and lofty endowment for which he prays; and yet, it is not an end in itself. The final goal is **to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing.** True knowledge of His will must always become an active force in life. Right thinking must issue in right conduct. For St. Paul there is no artificial boundary line dividing doctrine from ethics; for him they are inseparable. Right action must be based on right thinking, and, conversely, right thinking must issue in right action.

To walk worthily. The practical and the progressive sides of the Christian life are indicated by the conception of it as a "walk." It is no mere state of passive contemplation; it is active, involving the output of energy, and it is progressive, a journey along a road toward the golden gate and the heavenly city. Along this road the Christian must walk **worthily of the Lord;** that is, he must conduct himself as becomes one who is redeemed by Christ, in whom Christ dwells.

Unto all pleasing. The word that is here used had, generally, in Classical Greek, a bad sense, that of slavish obsequience. St. Paul is one of those whose usage lifts it to a higher plane. Used with reference to one's fellow men, it indicates an attitude that is bound to be mean and subservient. The life of the "man pleaser," solely directed to securing the approval of men, is a poor and tainted thing.

The life of the man who seeks in everything to please His Master, Christ, to satisfy Him, to win His approbation, is noble and exalted. Nothing can so stimulate and uplift the Christian's life as the constant effort to please Christ in everything. Col. i. 9–15.

The Christian's onward progress, dominated at every stage by the controlling desire to please his Lord, will be marked by fruitfulness in work and by still further increase in knowledge. Fruit-bearing is a figure in which St. Paul delighted; possibly he learned it from his Master's teaching. The daily walk in close companionship with Christ will manifest itself in various forms of goodness—fruitful **in every good work.** The faithful walk will also lead to fuller knowledge. Knowledge is not only the ground but the further result of the consistent Christian life. The path of obedience is the road to fuller light. "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching."

Hitherto he has spoken of the Christian life on its active side. He has prayed that they may please God "by increasing activity in the practice of goodness, as they get a deeper insight into the range and demands of the Divine Will." He now turns to the passive side, and prays that they may be strengthened to endure. The content of life is not exhaustively described in terms of knowing and doing; sorrow and suffering make their claim as well. To meet this and to bear it, there is granted to the suppliant Christian **all power,** not to be estimated in relation to his particular need, but in relation to the fulness of the Divine supply, the

Col. i. 9-15.

might of His glory. The word **glory** is used here, as often, to indicate God's Being as revealed to man. In this instance, the manifestation is that of His "might" vouchsafed to the Christian in his need, and bounded only by the omnipotence of God.

For patience.

The Christian so strengthened is enabled to display **all patience and long suffering with joy.** The word translated **patience** means, more strictly, "endurance," the attitude of one who bravely "carries on," braces his shoulders to carry the burden laid upon them. It indicates a temper far removed from that of despondency or cowardice.

For long-suffering.

Long-suffering is forbearance, the attitude of one who does not hasten to retaliate for inflicted wrong. It is the temper far removed from that of revenge and vindictive wrath.

"With joy."

The words **with joy** reveal St. Paul's profound knowledge of human nature. He knew very well that the constant need for the output of endurance and long suffering under injury might tend to produce in the sufferer a stern and almost gloomy temper; in some cases an attitude of grim determination, in others the demeanour of a suffering martyr. All this possible gloom must be at once illumined and expelled by the radiance of joy, not as a matter of individual temperament or disposition, but springing from the conscious sense of His presence in Whom "we are more than conquerors."

For thankfulness.

Finally, as the crown and completion of all that has gone before, he prays that the Colossians may ever be **giving thanks unto the Father.** The grounds for thankfulness are set forth in the words that

follow. The Christian who realises what God has done for him in Christ can be in no other mood than one of joyful thankfulness. Whatever he may be called on to do, and whatever he may be called to bear, should be viewed in the radiance of that light to which God has lifted them. What tends to make suffering intolerable is the feeling that it is aimless, without end or purpose. St. Paul bids his readers be thankful, because what they may have to bear is in the line of the Father's purpose, the gracious purpose of redemption He has accomplished in Christ. Col. i. 9–15.

In swift successive stages St. Paul goes on to describe the great things God has done for us. In the first place, He **made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.** He qualified us for a share in that inheritance.

Our inheritance.

The thought of **inheritance** seems to have been prominent in St. Paul's mind when he was writing the Epistle to the Ephesians and that to Colossæ. The idea is taken from the Old Testament. Just as the Promised Land belonged to Israel as a whole, while each member had his own particular holding in the tribal territory, so Christians share in common what their Lord bestows, while each has his own relationship and his own share of blessing. Each has his part in the whole, and no man's gain involves the loss of any other.

The inheritance is described as being **in light.** It is the heavenly kingdom where God dwells in light, of which, indeed, He is the light. "In Him is no darkness at all." The inheritance of the saints

Col. i. 9–15.

is the land whereof the Lord God is the light. That light is focussed in Jesus Christ Who is the Light of the world. Here in the world it shines in a darkness that obstructs its rays. But there will come a day and there will be a realm in which the light will shine with unhindered power, when God's glory shall be fully manifested and "the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it."

"Delivered."

How did God qualify us for this inheritance of light? He **delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.** The two clauses express the negative and the positive sides of God's great redemptive act. Each of them has, possibly, its root in the Old Testament narrative on which, as we have seen, the idea of "inheritance" most probably depends. As God delivered Israel from the bondage of Egypt, so He rescued us from the enthralling sway of sin. The verb implies both the wretched condition of the rescued and the struggle necessary to deliver them. We have been saved from a cruel realm in which Darkness reigns enthroned as king. Not only so, but we have been **translated.** This verb may contain an allusion to a customary practice of ancient warfare, the transportation of conquered peoples from their own land to some other portion of the conqueror's realm. The defeated Kingdom of Israel had experienced this at the hands of Tiglath Pileser. Possibly this episode in the history of his people suggested the expression to St. Paul. God, by an act of triumphant sovereignty, has transferred His redeemed ones from the bondage

"Translated."

of sin to citizenship in the realm of light in which His Son holds sway. The **Son of His love** is St. Paul's particular phrase, and it is not easy to be sure whether he means by it, "His beloved Son," or means to convey by the periphrasis the idea that Christ is begotten of the very essence of the Father which is Love. The former meaning seems, on the whole, more appropriate to the general sense of the passage. **Col. i. 9–15.**

In Whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins. Here we touch the heart of the gospel, the main ground for our continual thankfulness. **In Whom** is to be taken literally; possessing Christ, we possess "in Him" our deliverance; we keep it as our abiding possession. The present tense of the verb suggests the constant communication to us from Him to Whom we are joined by a living faith. Daily we may draw from Him to meet our daily need. "Redeemed."

We have to do here with a Greek word, the exact rendering of which has been the occasion of great debate. **Redemption** is the word chosen by the translators both of our Authorised and Revised Versions. It is retained, too, by so recent a translator as Dr. Moffatt, whose work is quite free from any slavish obedience to convention or tradition. Now, the primary meaning of the English word "redemption" is the freeing of a slave from captivity by the payment of a ransom. Some scholars, who admit that the Greek word may originally have had this meaning too, hold that in course of usage the word lost the primary meaning

Col. i. 9–15.

of ransom effected by payment, and simply came to mean "deliverance" in general, without any suggestion as to the particular method of its accomplishment.

We cannot here enter into a full discussion of the matter; more especially as it opens out into a consideration of the nature of Christ's atoning work. It must suffice to say that it would be an irreparable disaster to lose the word "redemption" from our English religious vocabulary. It is the consistent teaching of the New Testament that "Christ died for our sins," meaning that by the giving of His life He won life and freedom for us. The forgiveness of our sins is connected with the death of Christ. He died that we might live. It may be frankly admitted that the *rationale*, the ultimate solution of the problem *why* it was *necessary* that He should die, and *how* His necessary death is related to God's forgiving love, lies for the time beyond our ken. To know God fully and to know man fully may perhaps be the necessary condition for a final answer. But it is an inadequate criticism that brands the Christian doctrine of redemption by Christ's death as an immoral one. If it be so, the writers of the New Testament stand, as a whole, condemned. For they do connect the forgiveness of our sins with the redeeming death of Christ, and —if we accept our New Testament records as they stand—it would seem that what they teach they learned from Him.

"Forgiven."

The **redemption** is defined as **the forgiveness of our sins.** The ultimate penalty of sin is death, the

death which means total separation from God. The Divine forgiveness is the removal of that separation, the deliverance of the soul both from the sense of guilt and from the wrath of Him Who is both Judge and Father. **Redemption** in its fullest extent means delivery, not only from the guilt but from the power of sin. The initial stage is **the forgiveness of our sins.**

Col. i. 9–15.

V

CHRIST IN RELATION TO THE FATHER, THE UNIVERSE, AND THE CHURCH

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.—Col. i. 15–18.

Col. i. 15–18.

Redemption from the guilt and power of sin, restoration to full communion with God are the great concerns of any ethical religion. In Christ St. Paul found the solving of the problem and the fulfilment of the desire. For him Christ was all sufficient. He goes on, in the words that follow here, to set forth the grounds of this absolute sufficiency. He declares, on the one hand, Christ's relationship to God; on the other hand His relation to the whole created universe and to the Church.

The Colossian error.

It is with obvious reference to the false teaching prevalent at Colossæ that he sets forth so fully his conception of Christ. It may therefore be helpful if we pause at this point in our exposition to describe

briefly the character of this erroneous teaching. We depend on the indirect allusions in the remainder of this chapter, coupled with the more direct references in chap. ii. If we can gather a general idea of the form of error by which St. Paul was confronted, we can appreciate more thoroughly the thoughts he advances for its overthrow. Only a summary is here possible. More detailed accounts may be found in larger works. Col. i. 15–18.

Verses 13–26 in chap. i. and verses 8–23 in chap. ii. should be very carefully studied. It may fairly be gathered from them that certain features of this teaching had distinct affinities with Judaism. The references to circumcision, to the bond written in ordinances, to the new moon and the sabbath day, to specific ordinances, "Handle not, nor taste nor touch," seem to make this clear. Other features, however, were connected with origins not necessarily Jewish in character. There was, for example, the glorification of asceticism, accompanied by the claim to a superior standard of wisdom, derived, apparently, from the seeing of visions. The most important feature in the whole was the worshipping of angels. The general idea may have been that by ecstatic visions induced by ascetic practices, communion might be reached with this realm of angelic beings who would bestow upon these worshippers an exclusive wisdom, a knowledge of the things of God. In fact, these angels were the appointed mediators for any who would draw near to God.

The resulting system seems to have been a blend

Col. i. 15–18.

of these various elements, an eclectic mixture of Jewish ingredients (modified, perhaps, by the contact of Judaism with pagan forms of thought), with local popular religious views and practices. It was from the Jewish side, most probably, that the worshipping of angels sprang.

In the Old Testament belief in angels is clearly manifest, but it is in later Judaism that the idea is more fully developed, especially among the Rabbis and in the Apocalyptic literature. It is in the later writings, for example, that the close connection of the angels with the elements of the natural world is emphasised. Angels are mentioned of fire, wind, thunder, dawn, evening, and many other natural phenomena. Especially were they thought to be connected with the stars. Another function assigned to them was that of rule over and representation of the various nations of the world. In the Rabbinical literature they are conceived as being the responsible representatives of the different peoples, so much so that God punishes them before He punishes the peoples they represent.

As depicted in the Old Testament they are not necessarily good. Their character varies with the work they have to do. In later Jewish theology a clear distinction is drawn between angels and demons, but even so, the angels are often depicted as being far from perfect. It is in the later teaching, too, that they are described as being ranged in separate orders and ranks. One special function was assigned to them on the basis of Deut. xxxiii. 2. This passage was interpreted to mean that the Law

had been given to Israel through angels. Allusion is made to this in the record of Stephen's speech, and by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. **Col. i. 15–18.**

There are many passages in St. Paul's Epistles which show that he shared, in the main, the views of his countrymen on this subject. He speaks of them in ranks : " Angels, principalities and powers." He speaks of " the voice of the archangel." He declares that Christians " will judge angels." He shares the belief that the Law was given by their mediation. He possibly, too, connects them with the forms of nature in the phrase " the elements of the world." He even speaks of the possibility that angels, principalities or powers might separate us from the love of God.

When we consider the importance of the angels in later Jewish thought, we need feel no surprise that teachers should have risen at Colossæ who taught that they should be worshipped. There was a tendency to think of God as being very far aloof, inaccessible to sinful man. The angels were His intermediaries and agents in the creation and providential ordering of the world. They might more fittingly be approached in worship. So to view the matter was held to be the mark of true humility.

It was probably by people who were members of the Church that these views were being set forth. If the propagation of them had been the work of entirely external teachers, there would hardly have been the occasion for St. Paul's alarm. But if they were professing Christians, the question suggests

Col. i. 15–18.

itself, how did they adjust this teaching about the lofty prerogatives of angels to their view of Christ? What place did they hold in their system of thought? So far as we can answer by inference from St. Paul's language in the Epistle, it would appear that they assigned to Him some function in the government of the world but denied His supremacy. They regarded Him as one Mediator amongst others, but not necessarily the highest. The teaching, if allowed to pass unchallenged, would have struck at the very heart of the gospel. It would have dethroned and degraded the Saviour.

It was because he knew that such teaching was ripe at Colossæ that he went on to speak of Christ in the words we are now to consider. Each positive assertion gains additional strength if we read it against the background of the derogatory views that St. Paul has in mind.

Christ the Image of God.

Who is the image of the invisible God. The Apostle has already spoken of Christ as "the Son of His love." To our ears that expression might convey the notion of Christ's sole pre-eminence in relation to God. But when St. Paul wrote, angels and other spiritual beings were frequently spoken of as "Sons of God." Probably they were so called by the angel worshippers, and to Christ would be assigned a place among them, with the inference lying ready to hand that it might be possible to reach God by some other path than Christ. He therefore defines his Lord's position more precisely by calling Him **the image** of God. He had already applied the term to Him in the

Second Epistle to the Corinthians (iv. 4). The term had earlier associations that may have commended it to his mind. In the Book of Wisdom, the personified Wisdom is described as an "image" of God's goodness. The Jewish philosopher Philo uses the same term to describe the "Logos" or "Word of God." The opening words of the Fourth Gospel, though they do not employ the term "image," express the very substance of it. Col. i. 15–18.

What does St. Paul's use of it, here, imply? It implies that Christ's relationship to God is unique and absolute. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Being the "image" of God, the Son has such close likeness to Him as fits Him to be the very manifestation of God to us. God, Who is unknowable by us, becomes known to us in Christ. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

"The invisible God."

These words of St. John express an idea on which great stress was being laid in the religious thought of the age, the idea of God's transcendence, that is, His remoteness, far beyond all human conception or approach. St. Paul is voicing the same thought in his phrase, here, **the invisible God**. It was under the impulse of this idea that the heretical teachers developed their doctrine that the distance between God and man must be bridged and approach to Him made possible by intervening ranks of angelic mediators. Against this, St. Paul asserts the sole unrivalled place of Christ. He is the only Mediator. He fills all the space between God and man. On

Col. i. 15–18.

Him we depend for all true and certain knowledge of God.

The question may perhaps be raised as to the ground for all the tremendous far-reaching assertions that St. Paul makes in these words, and in those that follow after. It is to be noted, in answer, that he starts from an assertion about redemption wrought through God's beloved Son. The passage ends, too, with a reference to the "reconciliation" wrought by Christ's death. In fact, it begins and ends on the note of redemption. The conclusion from this would seem to be that St. Paul felt that in the Crucified Christ, the Revealer of God and the Saviour of men, he had come into touch with ultimate reality. Hence he draws forth and sets out all that is involved in this reality—"pre-existence, mediation of the Divine activity in creation, the sustaining principle of the universe, the goal of all being.[1]

Christ and the universe.

Having by one emphatic and decisive word indicated the unique and distinctive relation of Christ to God, he goes on now to indicate His relation to the whole created universe. His words in I Cor. viii. 6, "One Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom are all things," show that at an earlier stage in his life he had been meditating on Christ's relation to the universe. In the passage before us his language is more expanded and detailed. Although he does not actually use the word "Logos" (Word) it is evident that he is moving in the same atmosphere of thought as the opening words of the Prologue to

[1] Kennedy, *The Theology of the Epistles*, p. 154.

St. John's Gospel. He was also using terms em- **Col. i.** ployed by contemporary Stoicism and by Philo. **15–18.** There is, doubtless, a real apologetic motive in this. He wished to exhibit Christ as satisfying absolutely the requirements of prevailing religious philosophy.

Christ is **the firstborn of all creation.** At the "The firstborn." first glance this expression seems to place Christ as part of the created order, assigning to Him simply priority of place. If we merely look to the primary meaning of the word and to the grammatical possibilities of the passage it would be difficult to deny this inference. It is to be observed, however, that, in the context a clear distinction is drawn between Christ and "all things." Also, it is to be noted that the word for "firstborn" in the Old Testament, through the association with it of the privileges attaching to the firstborn, had gained, in usage, the further sense of rule or dominion. Possibly the two ideas are combined in St. Paul's use of the word here. Christ is before all—prior to the whole created universe. He rules over all. His dominion is supreme.

The clauses that follow express this commanding relationship in greater detail. **In Him were all things created. All things** does not quite here bring out the full force of the Greek. It means—"All the separate items of the universe, viewed in their totality as one combined whole," expressing at once the variety and the unity of the universe. The expression is repeated three times in quick succession, as though St. Paul wished to drive home by a series of hammer blows the thought of Christ's

Col. i. 15–18.

distinction from the universe. "The whole of things was created in Him." The act of creation depended causally on Him. He was, at it were, the reservoir in which all creative force resided and was, in a definite act, put forth. There is a magnificent inclusiveness about St. Paul's expression; the "whole of things" includes those angelic beings the Colossians were being taught to worship. They are but creatures as contrasted with Christ—the centre of creative life.

"Through Him."

All things have been created through Him and unto Him. Through Him. These words clearly enunciate the pre-existence of the Son and declare His relation to the Father. He was the Father's agent in the work of creation. He is the medium through which the creative energy finds expression. The words express the same truth as that declared by St. John, "All things were made by Him," and by the author of Hebrews, "through Whom also He made the worlds."

"Unto Him."

Unto Him. In these words St. Paul sets forth Christ as the final cause of creation, the goal of the whole world process. From Him all things take their start, to Him all move. To say that He is the goal of creation seems to be an advance on earlier teaching of the Apostle, which was that the final cause *for* Whom all things are, is God, as, for example, in Rom. xi. 36, I Cor. viii. 6. Some have made this difference of statement a reason for saying that *Colossians* was not written by St. Paul. It would not be fair, however, to pin St. Paul down to such exactitude of statement. It may be pointed

out that in I Cor. viii. 6, "through Whom are all things" is said of Christ. In Rom. xi. 36, "through Him are all things" is said of God. It is not proposed to raise the question of authorship, on this ground, as between *Romans* and *I Corinthians*. There seems to be no necessity to raise it, on a similar ground, here. Further, it is clearly taught by St. Paul in I Corinthians, that all things must be subjected to the Son before He hands His kingdom to the Father. The same thought is suggested by our Lord's words in Matt. xxviii. 18, "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth," and in Heb. ii. 8, "In that He subjected all things unto Him, He left nothing that is not subject to Him." It may fairly be claimed that this is the thought in St. Paul's mind here. Christ the beginning of creation is also its end, in such sense that no despite is done to His relation to the Father. Col. i. 15–18.

And He is before all things. More literally, "He Himself exists absolutely before all things." It is a matter of debate between commentators whether "before," here, indicates superiority of rank or priority in time. Probably the latter interpretation is to be preferred. The clause is, then, a renewed emphatic statement of Christ's pre-existence before all creation.

In Him all things consist. Not only did all things come into being through Him, but in Him they form a coherent unity, an ordered whole. In using this expression St. Paul is speaking the language of contemporary Stoic philosophers. They taught

Col. i. 15–18.

that life and order in the universe depend on the World-soul, which is the constitutive principle in the system of created things. The very word that St. Paul uses here, **consist**, is used in the same connection in contemporary philosophic literature. What they asserted of the "world-soul" he found realised in Christ. He found in Him the combining power of the universe that gives to it both unity and order.

In such terms as these St. Paul has set forth the cosmic significance of Christ. His own supreme interest is the religious one. Christ is the Son Whom the Father sent to save the world. But this conception involves metaphysical questions which demand an answer. And he does not refuse to meet them. Christ Who died on Calvary is the Eternal Son, the Divine agent in creation, the goal of all created life. He, in virtue of His Sonship with all that it involves of priority and supremacy, is the only Mediator, the only true connecting link between God and man. Beside Him angelic beings, "thrones or dominions or principalities or powers," have neither claim nor place.

Christ and the Church.

St. Paul passes on now to state Christ's relationship to the Church. It is necessary for him to do this because the heretical teaching with which he is dealing misjudged and belittled Christ not only in reference to the creation and government of the world, but also in reference to the redemption of mankind. As against this he declares in unequivocal terms that Christ has the same position of supremacy in the Church that He has in the

universe. "As in the universe He is source and origin of all being, so in the Church He is the beginning, both as being first and as being origin of all spiritual life." It is noteworthy that as the title **Firstborn** is applied to Him at the beginning of the words that set forth His relation to the universe, it appears again at the end of those which declare His relation to the Church, though in a slightly different setting. **Col. i. 15–18.**

In calling Christ **the head of the body, the Church,** St. Paul is applying with somewhat more of definite precision words and thoughts that had appeared in his earlier epistles. Both in *Romans* and *I Corinthians* he had spoken of the Church as a "body," comparing it with the physical organism. He had also, in *I Corinthians*, spoken of Christ as "the head of every man" in a passage (xi. 3) more particularly concerned with Church life and order. Here, he brings the two ideas into juxtaposition and close relation. As the head is to the body in the human frame, so is Christ to the Church of the redeemed. In popular physiology the head was regarded as the seat of life, the source from which it flows to all the limbs. The same idea is set forth by Our Lord in the metaphor of the Vine and the branches—the idea of common life extending from the living centre to every remotest and minutest branch. The head, too, may not unfittingly be regarded as the centre of unity in the body's life. It certainly stands for the notion of government and control. We may say, then, that in calling Christ **the head of the body** St. Paul declares Him **The Head.**

Col. i. 15–18.

to be the seat of the Church's life, the centre of her unity, the directing authority Whose word is absolute for all her members.

The Beginning.

Not only is He **the head,** He is also **the beginning.** Just as in relation to the universe He is "before all things" and source of all, so He is "the beginning" to the Church. He is so in virtue of His resurrection from the dead. A dead Christ could neither originate a Church nor sustain its life. Both the founding of the Church and the imparting to it of life depend, as St. Paul views the matter, on the historical fact of the Resurrection. It is because Christ first entered into the life that triumphs over death, and now in virtue of His victory reigns as living Lord, that He is Head of the Church, not only its source of life but also its ruling King.

That in all things He might have the pre-eminence. Perhaps, more literally, as Dr. Moule translates it: "That He might become in all things the holder of the primacy." What He *is* in nature in virtue of His Sonship, He *becomes* to the Church in virtue of His incarnation, death, and resurrection—supreme. Whether in nature or in grace His supremacy is absolute. The end of all the glories of creation and of all the marvels of Divine grace, is that the Son of the Father's love should stand out in solitary pre-eminence as Lord both of the Universe and of the Church.

VI

THE AIM AND THE CONDITIONS OF THE RECONCILING WORK OF CHRIST

For it was the good pleasure *of the Father* that in him should all the fulness dwell; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, I *say*, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens. And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unreproveable before him: if so be that ye continue in the faith, grounded and stedfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven; whereof I Paul was made a minister.—Col. i. 19–23.

Col. i. 19–23.

The translation of the opening words in this paragraph is not an easy matter. Both our English versions, with the agreement of Lightfoot, Moule, and Peake, supply "the Father" as the subject of the verb. Moffatt, in agreement with Ellicott and Abbott, makes "the fulness" the subject, translating it: "It was in Him that the divine Fulness willed to settle without limit." Either is grammatically possible, but, on the whole, the former one, the one generally familiar to us, seems to harmonise best with the context.

Col. i. 19–23. The Fulness.

The word for **fulness,** too, is exceedingly perplexing. If we, as is usually done, translate the Greek word *pleroma* by "fulness," the question follows, "fulness"—of what? To which the natural answer seems to be,[1] "the fulness, the plenitude of Godhead, the totality of the Divine powers and attributes." St. Paul seems to have in mind the thought he expresses in ii. 9, by the words: "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The fulness of God, all the illimitable wealth of what He is, is not distributed amongst angels or other forms of subordinate spiritual being. It is embodied in Jesus Christ. It **dwells** in Him; in Him it has its permanent abode.

Another way of taking the word *pleroma* is to interpret it as "complement," that which fills or completes, and to refer it to the Church, which is regarded as the "complement" of Christ, producing that completeness in Him which He now in some sense lacks. St. Paul's words that follow a little later are quoted in support of this view: "I fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ." There is also the fact that the head is an incomplete thing without the body, and that, from the point of view of this figure, Christ is incomplete without His Church.

When, however, the considerations that may be urged in support of this interpretation have been

[1] Professor Peake thinks that to make this indwelling depend on the will of the Father really involves an Arian view of Christ, and prefers to make "fulness" refer to "the fulness of Divine grace," "the whole charismatic riches of God."

duly weighed, it still seems more likely, especially in view of St. Paul's object in writing to the Colossians, that he is here occupied with the thought of Christ's plenitude, of all that He is, of the fulness of God manifested in Him because it dwells in Him. **Col. i. 19–23.**

And through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself. Still the Apostle continues to uphold Christ as the corrective to the erroneous teachings he would oppose. Probably the false teachers dreamed that reconciling agents might be found in the ranks of angelic mediators. Here Christ is set forth as the only means of reconciliation. Reconciliation.

It helps to a clearer understanding of these words if we notice how closely parallel they are with those earlier ones which set forth Christ's creative relation to the universe. Creation was **through Him.** Reconciliation, also, is **through Him. All things** were described as maintained by Him and subordinated to Him. **All things** by Him are reconciled.

All things here is to be taken as it stands. We are sometimes inclined to think of the reconciling work of Christ only with reference to sinful humanity. But St. Paul's thought takes a wider sweep. Reconciliation is as wide as creation. He believed that nature at large had shared in the consequences of the Fall. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." He also believed that nature would share in the blessings of redemption. The thought, too, may be included, that angels also—the angels on whom the

Col. i. 19–23.

imagination of the Colossians was dwelling—so far from being redeemers, are themselves included in the scheme of Divine redemption.

Returning now, as it were, from the wide and lofty flight to which his thought has soared, St. Paul comes to the realm of human experience, and, in particular, to that of his Colossian readers. They have been the objects of the Divine reconciliation. Formerly they were **alienated,** estranged from God. The word implies that they were not originally "aliens" but had become so. It involves the idea of the Fall. Not only were they estranged, but actively hostile, and the seat of this hostility was in the **mind,** the higher intellectual nature which thinks and wills. When this is alienated from God and hostile to Him, the result is seen in **evil works**—the practical outward expression of the moral enmity within.

To mankind in general, and to the Colossians in particular, so situated and so disposed, has come the gift of God's reconciliation. **You . . . hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death.** These words allude (in the language of theology) to the Incarnation and to the Atonement. The emphatic reference to **the body of His flesh** may convey a protest against the idea, afterwards so rife in Eastern thought, that Our Lord's body was not really one of flesh, but was only so in outward appearance. Or, perhaps more naturally, St. Paul may be regarded as thinking of the marvel of Divine condescension and compassion that He Whose being was of such transcendent greatness

should stoop to be born as man within the limits of our human life. Col. i. 19–23.

That He did so is a glorious element in the gospel; but it does not exhaust its message. **The body of His flesh** became the means of our reconciliation **through death.** St. Paul's thought is quite clear, as even modern criticism, which declines to follow it, will candidly admit. For him, "Christ's death has so met the requirements of the Divine law that the Divine love can come freely forth, and embrace and forgive sinful men." That fact is the very centre of the revelation of God in Christ, the very secret of His power. He has died. Voluntarily and of His own love, as well as in obedience to the Father's loving will, He has borne the consequences of the sin which He had never shared, in that life of sorrow and sympathy, in that separation from God which is sin's deepest penalty, and of which the solemn witness comes to us in the cry that rent the darkness, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and in that physical death which is the parable in the material sphere of the true death of the spirit. We do not know all the incidence of Christ's death. The whole manner of its operation has not been told us, but the fact has been. It does not affect the Divine heart. *That* we know, for "God so loved the world that He sent His Son." But it does affect the Divine government. Without it, forgiveness could not have been." [1]

What is the final aim of this manifestation of God The final aim.

[1] Maclaren, *Colossians and Philemon, Expositor's Bible,* p. 97 f.

Col. i. 19–23.

in Christ? It is **to present you holy and without blemish and unreproveable before Him.** The reference seems, most naturally, to be to the final judgment; and, if so, the adjectives are used most probably with a forensic meaning. St. Paul's words in Rom. viii. 33 f. expand the thought of **unreproveable.** "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that shall condemn?" It is a lofty destiny for man, a destiny worthy of God's redemptive work, that we should be presented pure and spotless before His throne. So far as God's gracious purpose is concerned the destiny is secure and fixed. But it is not absolute. There is an "if." There must be continuance in faith on the part of the redeemed.

The **if** may be called an optimistic one. The Greek expression rather implies that the condition will be satisfactorily fulfilled. The Apostle believes that they *will* continue in the faith. His insistence on faith arises probably from the fact that the false teachers were saying that the simple gospel needed to be supplemented by other means, if believers were finally to be saved. Trusting faith in Christ needs no supplementing by any other redemptive agencies. In that faith they must **continue.**

Continuance in faith.

In the next words he goes on to unfold the fuller meaning of continuance. He first employs positive terms, then negative, and takes his figures from the builder's craft. They are to be **grounded,** that is, firmly founded, the prime requisite for a stable building. The following adjective **stedfast** expresses

this consequent stability. They are to be fixed and firm, so much so that they do not yield to movements. The idea suggested by the present participle of the Greek verb is that some forces may be acting on them, applying such continuous pressure from without that in time they may be moved from their foundation—the hope proclaimed in the gospel. They must be so firmly founded on Christ, the Rock of their salvation, that no such pressure shall make them yield an inch. They must keep a firm hold on their hope, and the only way to do so is to keep fast on the foundation. **Col. i. 19–23.**

The ultimate reason for clinging to the gospel is that we believe it to be true. If we are convinced of that, then other subsidiary reasons may find a place too. To some such reasons St. Paul appeals in the words that close this passage. First, there is the appeal to experience: **the gospel which ye heard.** "You remember," he implies, "what the gospel was to you and what it did for you when first you heard it. Do not listen to any teaching inconsistent with that beginning." Then, there is the appeal to universal acceptance: **preached in all creation under heaven.** The experience of the Colossians was not peculiar to themselves. It was widely shared by others. Possibly, too, there is a side reference in this expression to the heretical teaching. "Do not abandon a thing which makes a universal appeal to humanity for some peculiar doctrine that wins the approval of a local few. Finally, there is the note of personal appeal: **whereof I Paul was made a minister.** It may voice

Col. i. 19–23.

a claim on their affection. It may also contain a reference to the vision on the Damascus road. "Such is the power of the gospel that I, Paul, the persecutor, became its preacher." It may include, too, the note of dignified authority. "I, Paul, the Apostle, stand firmly for the original gospel, however its claims may have been impugned by your critics at Colossæ."

VII

THE SUFFERINGS OF ST. PAUL AND THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church; whereof I was made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which was given me to you-ward, to fulfil the word of God, even the mystery which hath been hid from all ages and generations: but now hath it been manifested to his saints, to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we proclaim, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ; whereunto I labour also, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.—Col. i. 24–29.

Col. i. 24–29.

The words of this paragraph would be more closely and easily linked on to what has gone before if we were to adopt the reading followed by our English Authorised Version, and to connect by means of the relative pronoun, "Who now rejoice. . . ." The reading followed by the Revisers, however, has such a preponderating weight of manuscript support that we ought to accept it, in spite of its apparent abruptness of construction.

The paragraph as a whole is dominated by three

Col. i. 24–29.

great ideas, suffering, stewardship, mystery. As we follow it in detail we shall see how these are inter-connected and how they successively arise.

"Sufferings."

The opening words, **Now I rejoice in my sufferings,** refer to the fact that he writes as a prisoner. "I, who write to you, am suffering the rigours of imprisonment. It is for your sake that I am enduring them. They have come upon me in consequence of my proclaiming the gospel to you and to others. In the sufferings so caused I rejoice."

Then follow words that arrest and startle the reader. To give a full account of the attempted explanations of them would take far more space than we have at our disposal. All we can do here is to indicate what seems to be the obvious meaning of the separate words and to indicate the interpretation of their meaning that seems most adequate. St. Paul speaks of the **afflictions** of Christ. He also speaks of "something wanting or lacking in them," some "shortcoming"; and he says that he, himself, in his flesh, "supplements," "makes good," "fills up," this deficiency in the sufferings of Christ.

Is not this a strangely arrogant claim? How is it to be reconciled with St. Paul's general view of the sole sufficiency of Christ's atoning work? Of all the suggested explanations, two seem to stand out with the strongest claim for consideration. Some hold that the reference, in the word **afflictions,** is to the sufferings Our Lord endured on earth. But they draw a distinction. There were, on the one

hand, sufferings which were His alone; into which no man could enter, and no man could share—those sufferings which constituted, distinctively, His "Passion." But He also bore "afflictions" for the sake of the kingdom. In these "afflictions" His followers—for the sake of the kingdom—may, and must share. He bore as much as His earthly sojourn permitted Him to bear. What still remained to be borne must fall to the lot of His followers, and St. Paul, for his part, rejoiced to be permitted to supplement the deficiency, to bear what still remained to be borne. Col. i. 24–29.

The alternative view agrees in regarding the **afflictions** as those of Christ, not those, however, which He bore on earth, but those which He endures in St. Paul, in virtue of the mystical union between the Apostle and his Lord. The suggested thought is that Christ truly participates in the sufferings of His people borne for Him. The Head endures the pain the members bear. Any hardship or affliction borne by us in fellowship with Him is borne by Him. The "defect" or "deficiency" referred to is in Christ's **afflictions** in St. Paul. It is this deficiency that St. Paul rejoices to **fill up,** to supplement.

That the sufferings of Christ's servants are Christ's sufferings is profoundly true. The beautiful suggestion has been made that its truth was introduced to the thought of St. Paul, at Christ's meeting with him on the Damascus road. It was to fling in prison Christian men and women, the members of the Church, that he was journeying to Damascus.

Col. i. 24–29.

But Christ said: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *Me?*" "In all their afflictions, He was afflicted."

Either of these interpretations has a strong claim for consideration. The determining point between them is whether, with the former, we regard "the afflictions of Christ" as referring to the sufferings of His earthly sojourn; or whether, as in the latter we regard the expression as referring to the sufferings of His servants, in which He shares in virtue of the union between them and Him. On either view, Christ's mediatorial sufferings on the Cross are His alone. They can have no supplement. But His **afflictions,** whether regarded as those He bore on earth, or as those He now bears, in and with His followers, may be supplemented. It is the privilege of His followers to do so, a privilege in which St. Paul rejoiced.

In the words that immediately precede this passage he had said that he was the **minister,** or servant, of the gospel. With the same Greek expression, he here says that he **was made a minister** of the Church. It is because he is that, that he suffers for the Church. The words that follow explain how he came to be the servant of the Church.

"Stewardship."

It was in accordance with the "stewardship" or administration to which God had called him with special reference to the Gentiles, among whom the Colossians would be included. The final purpose of this particular field of administration committed to him was **to fulfil the Word of God,** to bring it to its full fruition, both by declaring all the wealth of

riches it contained and by proclaiming it throughout the world at large. **Col. i. 24–29.**

It must be so expounded and proclaimed because it is a universal gospel. Both its message and its appeal are world-embracing. It was St. Paul's great task to make this clear, to transform the Church from a Jewish sect to a world-wide society. He speaks of the great truth which it was his vocation to proclaim as a **mystery ;** by which, apparently, is meant a truth of revelation—that is, a truth that man could not have reached by any process of discovery, but can accept when God reveals it to him. The word was one in general use in various contexts. In the terminology of the contemporary "Mystery" religions it meant a truth unknown to the ignorant multitude, but made known to the initiated few. In more general use it had the general meaning of "a secret." A "mystery" was what we broadly mean by "a secret." St. Paul's use of the word is a more particular application of this general meaning. The nature of the gospel was God's "secret." He had kept His secret throughout the previous ages of history, and in the "fulness of the times" He had revealed it in His Son. **The Gospel "Mystery."**

The third chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians is a passage in which St. Paul enlarges on the proclamation of this glorious "secret" of the inclusion of all mankind within the gospel, and on his own high privilege as the especially commissioned declarer of it. Here, he says that it had been hid **from all ages and generations,** meaning by the

Col. i. 24–29.

inclusive phrase, the ages before the world, and then the generations of human history. Now, it has been displayed in all the fulness of its wealth to God's **saints**. The great glory of the mystery is that Christ is **in** them, dwelling in their hearts. He in His presence with them is the pledge, the sure ground for their hope of future glory. Just as Old Testament writers had conceived the coming of the Messianic age to be accompanied by glory, so glory is here the comprehensive word that indicates the all-embracing bliss of the triumphant end. Christ's presence with His servants now is the foretaste of what will be experienced when they shall be with Him. It is also the guarantee that they *will* be with Him. It is **the hope of glory.**

"Christ in you."

"It is He, Christ present in you," says the Apostle, "**Whom we proclaim.**" A Person, not a system of philosophy, or a scheme of thought. It is He, Who Himself said: "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life." The **we** is emphatic. It means St. Paul and his loyal associates as opposed to the false teachers at Colossæ. **Proclaim,** too, has its own particular emphasis. The gospel is a message from God, and the messenger's business is to set forth clearly and loudly what he has been told to tell.

A Gospel for all.

Admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom. Note the reiterated **every man.** The gospel is for all men; there is to be no selection of an appropriate few, no whispering of a secret in the ears of a select initiated coterie. St. Paul

declares war here on the whole notion that the facts and teaching of the gospel are rudimentary in character, adapted to the simple multitude, but only a veil for the higher truth to which the initiated few may rise. He rejoiced to be the preacher of a gospel that was for every man. To preach such a gospel he had already broken with the ceremonial exclusiveness of Judaism. He will certainly have no dealings with the intellectual exclusiveness insinuated by the teachers at Colossæ. With regard to **every man** the method of the gospel is the same; it is one of **admonishing** and **teaching.** It has been well suggested that these two words set forth and correspond to the two main elements in apostolic preaching "repent and believe." The former word has more to do with conduct. It rebukes and warns. The latter is concerned rather with the intellectual side of the faith, its character as the true and perfect knowledge. Col. i. 24–29.

This combination of warning and instruction is given **in all wisdom** and its object is **to present every man perfect in Christ.** Here we have two words, **wisdom** and **perfect,** which, just like the word "mystery" had special meanings in the terminology of contemporary "mystery" religions. Each of the words, of course, had its place in the everyday vocabulary of the ordinary man, and there are examples in the New Testament of such ordinary use. But the fact that in this part of his letter St. Paul is waging direct war on the external and alien elements by which it was sought to modify —and, as he held, destroy—the gospel, it is not

Col. i. 24–29.

improbable that he uses the terms with an implied reference to their employment by the false teachers. We might paraphrase his words in some such fashion as this :

" You speak of a mystery, of an esoteric wisdom only to be revealed to the initiated or perfect. We, too, have a mystery, the mystery of Christ, the universal Saviour of all. We have our perfect or initiated—those in whom Christ dwells and rules their life. We, too, have, in Christ, a wisdom that will satisfy the highest requirements of the mind of man. But we do not whisper a jealously guarded secret in the ears of a rare and chosen few. All that we know is for all. All that we have ever learned of Christ we tell to every man that all may share our knowledge."

In speaking of the proclamation of the gospel St. Paul included both himself and others, his faithful fellow-workers. He adds, here, a word of distinctly personal testimony. The obeying of the Divine call to preach a universal gospel has been for him no bed of roses. It has meant for him " toil," hard work, the output of every ounce of effort. And it has not only meant toil but conflict, " agonising " (the metaphor is from the struggle of combatants in the arena), a struggle with both inward and outward foes. The conflict might be hopeless if it were not for the strength supplied. But it was not waged **according to,** or in proportion to, his own strength. It was **according to** the mightily working energy of Christ within him. It was St. Paul's glad experience that in all the

conflict which being a Christian and proclaiming the gospel may involve, He for Whom we fight, fights with us as our ally and within us as our strength. In dependence on His mighty working we are "more than conquerors." **Col. i. 24–29.**

VIII

ST. PAUL'S INTENSE CARE FOR HIS CONVERTS

For I would have you know how greatly I strive for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; that their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, that they may know the mystery of God, *even* Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden.—Col. ii. 1–3.

Col. ii. 1–3.
His care for his converts.

There is no break in thought between the opening words of this chapter and the closing words of the previous one. St. Paul continues to enlarge upon his thought for the Colossian Church, his agonising concern for their welfare. The words **I would have you know** represent the Greek of an expression that —with certain verbal variations—he often uses in his epistles, when he wishes to arrest the attention of his hearers; to underline, as it were, with emphasis the words that he is saying.

He has already told them that his work for Christ means for him not only "toil" but "striving" or "conflict." He tells them now that he has this same "conflict," this same "agonising" on their behalf in particular. It is true that they and he are very far apart, separated by all the distance that

lies between Colossæ and Rome ; true, too, that he is a helpless and imprisoned captive. But he bears them in his heart. He is full of sympathy, racked by anxiety ; plunged by both into such an agony of solicitude that he agonises for them in continual prayer ; ever dwelling, as he prays, upon the errors to which they are being exposed, and upon the help that he can give them to resist the errors. **Col. ii. 1–3.**

It was characteristic of St. Paul to lay bare to them his heart in this spontaneous way. It is possible, also, to see in his so doing, a certain loving tactfulness. He had ready in his mind, just awaiting utterance, certain weighty warnings. He had an instinct that his readers would more readily receive these warnings if they were made to realise beforehand that they came from one who loved them deeply ; whose words, even of implied rebuke, were the overflow of ardent affection. He bids them mark, therefore, how deeply his inmost feelings are stirred on their behalf.

The assurance was not superfluous, because the Colossians and their neighbours at Laodicea who had never—as the following words are generally taken to imply—seen St. Paul face to face, might possibly imagine that his interest in them was not so keen as it was in the members of those Churches which he had personally founded. He wishes them to know, and to know with real conviction, that this absence of personal knowledge erects no barrier between him and them. Just because he had not met them and had not himself taught them, his solicitude on their behalf is more intense and real.

Col. ii. 1–3.

Having assured them of his love and of his deep continuing interest in their welfare, he goes on to declare more fully what is the object of his striving, what it is that he so ardently desires on their behalf. The first thing is, **that their hearts may be comforted.** The Greek word translated by "heart" has a wider meaning than is usually attached to the English word. We generally associate "heart" with the emotions, and more particularly with the emotion of love. The Greek word includes not only emotion, but also intellect and will. It embraces, in fact, the whole of the inward personality. **Comforted,** too, as we generally use the word, with reference to consolation in trouble, does not quite express the whole meaning of the Greek verb. That idea is certainly included, but there is also contained the sense of being encouraged or strengthened, which seems to be the required meaning here. What they needed in face of the attacks of error was a high spirit, a cheerful heart of courage, that would enter on the fight with serene confidence in victory. They must be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Love the source of strength.

The way to be strong was to be **knit together in love.** Love is the true basis and bond of that unity which gives confidence and strength. As slender fragile twigs when bound together will form a strong and rigid bundle, so the Christian in loving association with his fellow Christian gains added strength. Not merely, however, by the force of inter-acting love. The mutual love of Christians must be founded on their common love for Christ. This is

the only fixed foundation for the love that will knit Christians together in confidence and strength. **Col. ii. 1–3.**

To be so knit together will greatly help the Colossians in their particular need; it will give them full assurance, confident certitude, in the truth of the gospel—absolute unwavering conviction that in Jesus Christ they have both truth and life. The word that St. Paul uses here may mean "fulness" or **full assurance.** The latter shade of meaning seems suited to the context, and our Revisers have used it in their text. He is praying that his readers may enter into the wealth which consists in deep insight into Christian truth accompanied by an unwavering hold upon it. The following words express more fully what that truth is. It is **the mystery of God,** *even* **Christ.** Knowledge of this is really that rich fulness of insight which he trusts may be theirs in love. The word for "knowledge" is the one he has already used in i. 9 with reference to the "knowledge of His Will." St. Paul prays that they may enter more fully into the knowledge of God's "mystery" revealed in Christ. In Him the revelation has been fully made and is complete. But our apprehension of it may grow. We may pass from stage to stage of knowledge, and be ever advancing in learning, but we can never exhaust the fulness of the wealth that is in Him, **in Whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden.**

It is possible that some of the words in this sentence, "treasures," "wisdom," "knowledge," "hidden," played a distinctive part in the doctrine

Col. ii. 1–3.

of the false teachers at Colossæ, and that St. Paul is deliberately adopting their vocabulary in order to make it clear that all that they were urging their followers to seek by paths remote and difficult was fully to be found in Christ. All wisdom and knowledge are in Him. He is the Light of men because He is the Eternal Word and the Incarnate Wisdom. Seeing that—not some, but all—the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Him, the search for them apart from Him is doomed to failure. Not only are they in Him, but in Him they are **hidden ;** not hidden, as in the contemporary Mystery religions, from the eyes of ordinary folk, but hidden from the heedless and the careless, hidden, in fact, from those who do not yearn to see ; so hidden, as to disclose continually their abundance to prayerful search and loving thought.[1]

[1] There is a striking coincidence here between St. Paul's words and some in the part of the Book of Enoch known as the *Similitudes*. In chap. xlvi. 3 the writer, speaking of the Son of Man, says, "This is the Son of Man who . . . reveals all the treasures of that which is hidden." The parallel is so close as to support the suggestion, based on this as well as on other points of contact as close as this, that St. Paul was acquainted with the *Similitudes*. This, of course, does not exclude the possibility, suggested in the text, that the idea of hidden treasure also played a distinctive part in the teaching of the Colossian heretics. The points of contact between St. Paul and the *Similitudes* are set out by Dr. St. John Thackeray, *The Relation of St. Paul to Contemporary Jewish Thought*, pp. 250 ff.

IX

KINDLY PREPARATION FOR WORDS OF CRITICISM

This I say, that no one may delude you with persuasiveness of speech. For though I am absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.

As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and builded up in him, and stablished in your faith, even as ye were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.—Col. ii. 4–7.

Once again we have occasion to note the exquisite tact with which St. Paul prepares his readers to receive his warnings. He is drawing very near now to the point of conflict where he will come to close grips with the errors he is to denounce. Here he reiterates his assurance to them that his condemnation is not for them, but for those who may mislead them. He is writing not because they have gone wrong, but lest they should go wrong under the plausible guidance of those who would divert them from the gospel. All he says, too, is dictated by the intensity of his affection for them. **Col. ii. 4–7.**

This I say. The **this** includes all that he has been saying at least from i. 24 onwards, including both the expression of his loving interest in them, as well as his emphatic setting forth of Christ as God's

Col. ii. 4–7.

mystery, the fount of all wisdom and all knowledge. All this he has said to guard them, if possible, against those who would mislead them by **persuasiveness of speech.** Persuasiveness of speech is in itself no bad thing. St. Paul himself is using it in this passage. The Greek word used to express it conveys no bad meaning. It depends entirely for what purpose it is used. Here St. Paul would seem to censure it, because its object is to **delude,** to lead astray, to suggest to Christian converts that the **treasures of wisdom and knowledge** must be sought elsewhere than in Christ.

The faith of the Colossians.

The risks arising from these delusive teachings fill him with anxiety ; and yet his anxious thoughts are illumined by joy. His bonds prevent him from coming in person to their succour, but what he hears is sufficient to cheer and reassure him. He rejoices at the **order** and the **stedfastness** of their faith in Christ. Commentators debate whether both or either of these expressions is a military metaphor. Certainly the former seems most naturally to be so. It seems to convey the notion that, as yet, against all attacks of error the Colossians presented an ordered front like that of disciplined and well-drilled troops. Whether the latter expression, **stedfastness,** continues the military metaphor or not, it would seem to refer rather to inward condition than to outward rank. The noun implies the stability and strength that rises from a solid front. St. Peter (I. v. 9) uses the corresponding adjective in connection with faith : " Whom withstand, stedfast in your faith." The correspond-

ing verb is also used in connection with faith in Acts xvi. 5: "The churches were strengthened in the faith." So St. Paul rejoices here that the Colossians presented to error not only the order of well-drilled ranks, but the firm bulwark of a stedfast faith. He felt sure that the Church as a whole was still loyal to the teaching it had received. **Col. ii. 4–7.**

In what he has just said he has both warned them and commended them; warned them against plausible error, commended them for stedfast faith in Christ. If Christ Whom they have accepted and to Whom they have committed themselves is to be truly theirs, they must **walk** in Him. What they have learned and are still learning of Him must guide and control every onward step in active life. What we learn of Him we must obey, is, for the Christian, the rule.

St. Paul has been dwelling in various ways on all the wealth that is in Christ, and here, apparently, he wishes to emphasise that thought by the combination of names he applies to Him. There is debate between commentators as to the precise mode of combination; whether we are to say, "the Christ, even Jesus the Lord," or, as in our English A.V. and R.V., "Christ Jesus the Lord." Either would seem to be a possible expression for St. Paul, but the former seems most closely to represent the Greek.

Possibly the thought of the prevalent errors has helped to determine the form of the expression. The effect of these errors has been to limit and degrade Christ. St. Paul would therefore have his

Col. ii. 4–7.

readers realise Who and What He was Whom they had received as their Saviour. He was the Christ, the *Messiah*, God's Anointed One, to Whom Old Testament prophecy looked on as the coming Deliverer. He was Jesus, the historic figure, the Man of Bethlehem and Galilee, Whose words and deeds and sufferings were solid facts of history. And He, Jesus, the Messiah, was Lord of angels and men and all the universe. As such they had received Him, as such they must still regard Him and obey Him. The very names that were His would tell them that in Him was such a wealth of fulness that it was futile to dream of angel mediators to intervene between men and God or to control His created universe.

Walking.

In Him, so regarded and revered, the Christian must **walk.** The figure of walking is familiar enough in Scripture, as elsewhere, to express the fact that life means not only the output of active energy, but also progress to a goal that lies ahead. But there are other aspects of life too, and St. Paul is not deterred by any slavish fear of mixing his metaphors, from including them in his survey. It is not that he confuses his figures. He passes swiftly, in the onrush of his thought, from one to another. Christians must not only **walk** in Christ; they are

Rooted.

rooted and **being builded up in Him.** He passes from the figure of the road to that of the tree and of the building.

The change of tense as well as of idea should be noted. The rooting took place in the past and still continues. At the beginning the Christian struck

root in Christ, and rooted in Him, more firmly and strongly, he still remains. The **being builded up** is depicted as a process, the rearing of a fabric that goes on through life. This thought supplies the idea of continuing effort. The Christian does not only grow like a tree or plant, though that expresses well one aspect of his life; but there is also the element of effort, of laborious constructive building. Life is a **being builded up in Him.**

Col. ii. 4–7.

Builded up.

What these two metaphors have implied is re-asserted in plain terms in the next phrase, **stablished in your faith.** That, too, is in the Greek, a present participle, suggesting a continuous process. He has just acknowledged with joy the **stedfastness** of their faith. He tells them now that it must still increase in firmness and strength. An ever-growing and ever-deepened faith in Christ is the condition of our keeping rooted in Him and continuing to be built up in Him. A firmer faith will mean a closer walk.

Stablished in faith.

It is significant that in giving them all these loving counsels he refers them back to what they learned at first, **even as ye were taught.** Progress in the faith does not consist in surrendering the gospel account of Christ; in forsaking the historic facts for some speculative assemblage of ideas. It consists in entering more profoundly, with more loving fulness of comprehension, into the meaning of the facts, in exploring more deeply the significance for life and for thought of all that is in Christ. The Christian's life will be fruitful and its building will be strong, just in proportion as it is in harmony

Col. ii. 4–7.

with the original verities of the simple gospel message.

The need for thankfulness.

Finally, they must be **abounding in thanksgiving.** This is no mere devotional climax; it expresses a deep truth. What St. Paul has been protesting against is the idea of any inadequacy in Jesus Christ, any notion that faith in Him needs to be supplemented by ritual asceticism, if the highest life is to be reached. The corrective to this is to dwell on all the riches they possessed in Christ. And, he tells them here, the way to realise the resources of their own experience is to cultivate a spirit of joyous thankfulness for all they had received in Christ. The man who thankfully recalls all that God has done for him in Jesus is neither likely to doubt that He is abundantly adequate for all the needs of his soul, nor to falter in loyal obedience to Him. There is no such incentive to men both to do and to endure as the joy that springs from loving gratitude. This needs to be learned both by individuals and by the Church. "A Church which has lost this impulse, which has no real and deep sense of being what it is because of the redeeming love of Christ and the living power of His Spirit, has really lost a Church's soul. It has the consciousness only of an ecclesiastical or ethical or theological society, which issues endless programmes, as many societies do, but which has ceased to utter the one thing peculiar to the Church, and that is the Divine praises. The true Church, before it has any social programme or any theological system, knows its infinite indebtedness to the redeeming and saving

love of God in Christ; and its first, because its *instinctive* voice is adoring and grateful praise. Before either sociology or theology is doxology: 'Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood, and made us a kingdom and priests unto His God and Father, *be* the glory and the dominion for ever and ever.'" [1] Col. ii. 4–7.

[1] Carnegie Simpson, *Church Principles*, p. 174.

X

THE DISEASE AND THE CURE

Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power.—Col. II. 8–10.

Col. ii. 8–10.

The false teaching at Colossæ.

Hitherto we have had to form impressions about the false teaching at Colossæ from hints supplied by St. Paul's words of warning. Here we come into direct contact with it. He indicates quite clearly what it is these teachers are trying to do and what it is that the members of the Church must firmly resist.

Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit. The apparently slight difference here between the R.V. words and those of the A.V., "lest any man spoil you," is an attempt on the part of the Revisers to represent more clearly, in English, the construction of the Greek words. That construction is intended to convey the idea that the danger to which St. Paul is pointing is real and not imaginary. The thing he fears is not far from actual realisation.

Maketh spoil of you, also, as contrasted with the A.V. "spoil," indicates the adoption of a particular rendering by the Revisers. "Spoil," in ordinary English, may mean to plunder or to rob, and some scholars, ancient and modern alike, hold that this is the intended meaning here, "lest any man rob you." The alternative rendering of the Revisers, "maketh spoil of you," is, on the whole, to be preferred. The idea is that of carrying off as spoil, leading away captive. The Colossians had, through Christ's redemption, been translated into the kingdom of light and settled there as free citizens. The danger now was that they might again be captured and carried back to bondage. Col. ii. 8–10.

Whether this danger arose from one teacher, or from more than one, is not clearly indicated. Nor can we be certain whether or not the instigator of the trouble was known by name to St. Paul. At any rate, he gives no name, and his language is studiously vague.

Through his philosophy and vain deceit. It is of importance to note here (what the construction of the Greek makes clear), that the second expression is simply a description of the first. They both, that is, refer to one and the same thing. "His philosophy which is an empty deceit." Bishop Lightfoot's paraphrase brings out the connection well: "Do not suffer yourselves to fall a prey to certain persons who would lead you captive by a hollow and deceitful system which they call philosophy." Deceit posing as philosophy.

St. Paul has no quarrel with philosophy as such.

Col. ii. 8–10.

His quarrel was with the "empty deceit" which called itself philosophy. So far as philosophy means an honest attempt to think out and co-ordinate one's views of God and self and the world, St. Paul would doubtless have viewed it with such respectful sympathy as was possible for a man of Jewish origin and training. It is, however, a fair inference from what we have already read in this Epistle that he would have regarded with coldness, indeed with aversion, any attempted solution of the riddle of the universe which left out Christ. Here, however, he is not concerned with the larger aspect of the question. His censure is directed to the "vain deceit" which masqueraded as philosophy and called itself by that high name.

"The tradition of men."

Why it is a "vain deceit" he goes on now to show. In the first place, it is **after the tradition of men,** that is, it is a man-made thing. The charge implied in this phrase may well be aimed at either the element of Jewish legalism or that of Oriental mysticism which appear to have been blended in the Colossian heresy. The phrase had been used as descriptive of Jewish legalism by our Lord when He said to the Scribes and Pharisees: "Ye leave the commandment of God, and hold fast to the tradition of men."[1] It expressed, too, the esoteric doctrine of the Mystery cults that could only be whispered in secret to the ears of the initiated few. From whichever side it came this human tradition was an empty and deceitful thing in comparison with God's revelation of His Will in Jesus Christ.

[1] St. Mark vii. 8.

Col. ii. 8–10. "The rudiments of the world."

The second element of worthlessness in the false teaching is, that it is **after the rudiments of the world.** The interpretation of the Greek words which this phrase represents is an exceedingly difficult matter, and the larger works on the Epistle should be consulted for a full discussion. The rendering just given is that of both the A.V. and the R.V. It is followed by Bishops Lightfoot and Moule in their commentaries, and by Dr. Maclaren in the *Expositor's Bible.* The meaning of it is that the doctrine of the false teachers, so far from being exalted and advanced, as it claimed to be, was really a return to what was elementary and childish, the very A B C of religious teaching. These teachers had professed to treat the gospel preached by St. Paul and Epaphras as childish matter, fit only for beginners, from which their own doctrines moved on to loftier heights. St. Paul here turns the tables on them. The matter is precisely the other way about. Compared with the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are in Christ and are set forth in the gospel, it is *their* teachings that are a return to the childish elements.

It is to be noted in support of this rendering that the word translated "rudiments" did originally mean the letters of the alphabet, and then in later Greek usage—which it is assumed that St. Paul is here following—it came to mean the rudiments of knowledge. It is used, as will be remembered, more than once in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians, with the same general reference, it is suggested, there as here. The Galatians in

Col. ii. 8–10.

returning to Judaism and unduly exalting its precepts were, in reality, going back to the rudiments that in Christ they had left behind.

The word, however, has had a varied history and has been used with still other meanings than this. In philosophic writings it was used both for the heavenly bodies, and also for the physical elements of the universe. Some patristic writers held that the reference to the heavenly bodies was the one adopted by St. Paul both here and in the passage in Galatians.

As against all these views there is another which appears to be winning its way to favour. One of the main points in it is the strong conviction that the Greek word here in question must have a personal meaning. In this passage the "rudiments of the world" are contrasted with Christ, and it is urged that the word (*stoicheia*) translated "rudiments" should most naturally be construed personally.

The question obviously arises, "what persons?" And the answer is, "the elemental spirits which animate all material things." According to later Jewish theology all things had their special angels. The Rabbis taught that there is nothing in the world, not even a plant, that is without its angel. These angels are called "the elements of the world" from the elements which they animate. So all return to legal observances, all attempts to approach God by ascetic abstinence from material things, is a lapse from the freedom that is in Christ back to the service of these elemental angels.

We have not the opportunity here for an

exhaustive discussion of the respective merits of these contending views. It must suffice to say that in spite of certain attractive features in the latter view, the former seems to have the stronger claim as being both more natural and more suited to the general context both in Galatians and in Colossians. We take, then, the second ground of condemnation of this "vain deceit" to be that it is a return to the stage of rudimentary beginnings which the Christian should have left behind. **Col. ii. 8–10.**

In either case—whether the emphasis be laid on the merely human tradition, or on the return to what is elementary—it is **not after Christ.** It neither originates with Him nor is He its regulative standard. In fact, the false teachers had put their angels in the place of Christ. This was, in St. Paul's eyes, the final condemnation of the whole system. Ritual observances and speculative dreamings may be harmless in themselves and in their own place. When they are employed to supplant or to supplement the work of Christ, the Apostle's attitude is one of most unqualified disapproval. He will fight them, without quarter, to the end.

Our discussion of this perplexing phrase has tended to run to an excessive length. And, in passing on, we find that difficulties still await us. We are confronted by the great—we might almost say, tremendous—phrase: **In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.** We can, of course, see its relation to what has gone before. It gives the reason why any attempted substitute for Christ or additions to His work, such as St. Paul has been

Col. ii. 8–10.

describing, are so utterly impossible and unthinkable. St. Paul, too, has already spoken of God's "fulness" dwelling in Christ. But it is the final adverb that presents a problem to the theologian, and, indeed, to any reflecting Christian reader. **Bodily**—what does that mean?

It is the only occurrence of the word, not only in St. Paul's Epistles, but in the whole Greek Bible. Taken as it stands, it can only mean one thing, "corporeally," or "bodily." In what sense, then, can all the fulness of the Godhead be said to dwell, in Christ, "in bodily wise"? Of the many attempts to answer this question, two seem to have a claim on our consideration.

There is, in the first place, the view that the reference is to the body of the incarnate Christ. A further thought is added here to what was said in Col. i. 19. "For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell." There, the fulness of the Godhead is said to dwell in the Eternal Word, not in the incarnate Christ. Here, the adverb "bodily" adds the further truth that the Eternal Word, in Whom the fulness dwelt, "became flesh" and dwelt among us, as a man, with human body. Not only in the pre-incarnate Word, but in the Word "made flesh" did the fulness of the Godhead dwell. This is the view upheld by Bishop Lightfoot, on whose note upon the passage the previous words are based.

The other view that claims a hearing is that the adverb should be translated "in the form of a body," meaning that Divine fulness dwells in Christ, as a

complete and organic whole, and not in any partial way. So understood, it emphasises the point that St. Paul is making against the false teachers—against any doctrine that the fulness of the Godhead is, as it were, distributed among the angels, or is only partially in Him—the point that all the Divine fulness dwells in Him and does not do so in any fragmentary way, but as an organic whole, in "bodily wise." This interpretation is suggested by Haupt and is adopted by Professor Peake as being most suitable. Col. ii. 8–10.

It is just a question—so hard to decide without the aid of parallel passages—of the more literal or more figurative use of the adverb. If we press the literal meaning we are led to Bishop Lightfoot's interpretation. If we take it more figuratively, Haupt's interpretation is attractive. Bishop Lightfoot's view compels a reference to the incarnate Christ. Haupt's view involves the same assertion about the indwelling of the whole Godhead in Christ, but without the particular reference to His incarnate state. Whichever view we take, the truth expressed, completely and finally excludes the erroneous views against which St. Paul is contending.

All the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ, bodily, so that it may be made available for us. **And in Him ye are made full.** These words can hardly mean that the Godhead is to be thought of as dwelling in the Christian in the same sense as it dwells in Christ. That would involve an equalising of Christians with their Lord that is not to be

Col. ii. 8–10.

expected from St. Paul. What the words do imply is the living union of the Christian, by faith with Christ, in Whom and through Whom all the fulness of Divine life may pass to us. "The treasure was lodged in the earthen vessel of Christ's manhood, that it might be within our reach."[1] In Him every conceivable spiritual need and every spiritual desire finds fullest satisfaction.

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
More than all in Thee I find."

The prospect is limitless. The more we have, the more shall we desire. To him that hath, shall be given. It was into this region of glorious and infinite possibility that St. Paul's thought soared, when he prayed for his readers in the Epistle to the Ephesians that they might "be filled into all the fulness of God."

If this be true, if the Godhead dwells "bodily" in Christ, and, in Him, is so richly, fully, available for us, how misleading and utterly wrong is the thought that we need the help and mediation of angelic beings! Why go to creatures and subordinates when in Christ we find God? Of all such **principality** and **power**—terms used perhaps of the ranks and functions in the angelic world—He is the Head. It is idle and useless to seek the aid of inferior ministers when we have direct access to the King.

[1] Maclaren, *in loc.*

XI

CIRCUMCISION IN CHRIST

In whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, being dead, through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you, *I say*, did he quicken together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.—Col. ii. 11–13.

Why does St. Paul, in continuing his assertion of the all-sufficiency of Christ, make special reference here to the Jewish rite of circumcision? It is probably because those whose teachings at Colossæ he was opposing included in their varied doctrines certain Jewish elements, insisting on circumcision not so much as indispensable for the Christian, but as conferring a higher degree of sanctity. That was, in essence, as we may again remind ourselves, the whole situation against which St. Paul was contending. The general content of the heretical teaching was that the gospel as proclaimed to them by St. Paul and Epaphras might serve for simpler folk living in the lower levels of the Christian life; but that those who would rise to the loftier heights must do so by obedience to this special discipline, partly ritual and partly speculative in character,

Col. ii. 11–13.

Col. ii. 11–13.

embodying, in its contents, obedience to certain Jewish rites and practices and acceptances of Jewish speculations in the realms of angelology.

It is probably because circumcision was treated as supplementary to Christianity, and not as indispensable to its very essence, that St. Paul here dismisses it with a passing mention. Had it been proposed as a necessity to the Christian life, he would, we may think, have demolished the idea with vigour and at length, as he did in the Epistle to the Galatians.

Circumcision in Christ.

What he does say is clear and incisive. Why should they dream of returning to the rite of circumcision when in Christ they have fully received all that circumcision had ever symbolised and foretold? This was indeed a returning from the higher to the lower, from more advanced teaching to rudimentary elements. In Christ, it might be truly said, they had been circumcised. But in Him it was a spiritual experience, not the carrying out of a rite "made with hands." It was not the removal of a fragment of the flesh with the due performance of a ritual. It was such a complete inward and spiritual revolution that it might be described in wholesale terms as **the putting off of the body of the flesh.** The terms in which St. Paul sets forth this great and striking contrast require some more detailed consideration.

In Whom ye were circumcised. The tense of this verb implies a reference to a definite historical fact, presumably to the moment of their conversion, their acceptance of Christ as Saviour. It involved

a spiritual experience, it was a circumcision of the heart. That true circumcision must be inward and spiritual had been seen and expressed by prophetic writers of the Old Testament in such passages as: "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart,"[1] and: "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah."[2] Here he aserts that this inward circumcision of the heart is truly realised in turning to Christ and becoming His. **Col. ii. 11–13.**

In the putting off of the body of the flesh. These words are evidently intended to contrast the removal of a fragment of the flesh, involved in the rite of circumcision, with the spiritual transformation involved in faithful acceptance of Christ. That the reference is to what is internal and spiritual is clear from St. Paul's emphatic words that it is **a circumcision not made with hands.** It consists in the "putting off," the complete stripping off, "of the body of the flesh." What is the meaning here? It certainly is not physical death; a man does not die on becoming a Christian. The expression is an unusual one, but it seems to mean, the body which consists of flesh, that flesh which is the seat of sin. St. Paul did not regard the body as wholly and hopelessly evil, but he did recognise most clearly that the flesh of which it is composed is the source and seat of many of our most soul-destroying temptations. Not merely are we

[1] Deut. xxx. 6. [2] Jer. iv. 4.

Col. ii. 11–13.

tempted to those sins which are more distinctively classed as sensual, but there is all the hindrance to higher life that comes from the weakness and limitation of the flesh. Neither asceticism nor any other expression of will power can triumphantly cope with this. Nothing can but the indwelling power of Christ. In the converted and baptised man a new principle is set up, which not only delivers him from the dominion of his fleshly instincts, but enables him to triumph over them. It does so potentially and ideally at first, and actually, the more intimately he enters into communion with Christ and so experiences more fully the power of Christ within him. The earlier verses of the eighth chapter of Romans are St. Paul's classic expression of the Christian's triumph in this conflict between the spirit and the flesh. Here he describes its initial stage as the putting off of the body of the flesh **in the circumcision of Christ.** This latter phrase cannot mean the rite of circumcision to which Christ submitted, because that was "made with hands." What St. Paul *did* mean is a matter of some debate, but it seems, most naturally, to signify the circumcision of our hearts which comes from Him, which He originates.

Buried in baptism.

Having been buried with Him in baptism. In the heart and life of the man who has submitted to Christ and accepted Him as Saviour, a spiritual change has been wrought which may be described as a "circumcision not made with hands," a "putting off of the body of the flesh," a "circumcision which is of Christ." St. Paul now goes on to associate this

great spiritual experience with Christian baptism, the outward sign and seal of the experience. **Col. ii. 11–13.**

How the inward and the outward in this matter are related has long been a matter for theological and ecclesiastical debate. There is the one who greatly emphasises the *opus operatum* of the Sacrament, holding that the water accompanied by the appointed word is a specific channel for the bestowal of Divine grace. There is his critic who emphasises first the absolute necessity for faith on the part of the recipient, regarding the outward rite as important, if for no other reason than because it is Christ's ordinance, but of subordinate importance, symbolising and illustrating the inner spiritual experience of cleansing and regeneration. The controversy has centred round St. Paul himself, some finding in his words a "high" doctrine of sacraments with emphasis on their absolute necessity, others maintaining that such views are read into the Apostle's words which, taken as they stand, are innocent of any such notion. These last, of course, do not deny the place of the Sacraments in the Church's ordered life. What they do maintain is that the inward attitude of faith is the one requisite. With regard to baptism, for example, the former would hold that baptism effects the change within, the latter that baptism is the outward symbol of an inward experience; that the immersion of the baptised person in the water symbolises his inward participation in the death of Christ, his emergence from the water his participation in Christ's resurrection.

Col. ii. 11–13.

It would be apart from our purpose here to follow up this controversy. So to discuss the relation of the outward to the inward is probably to raise a problem which—in relation to the Christian sacraments—hardly presented itself to St. Paul's mind. To accept Christ as Saviour, to be born to a new life in Him, and to be baptised, were probably to him two inseparable things, two necessary elements in one whole action, just as in the evangelising work of the foreign missionary field to-day. To emphasise either at the expense of the other would have seemed to him a strange and unwarrantable thing. One other thing, too, may with some confidence be asserted, that St. Paul never thought or spoke of either sacrament except in connection with the faith of its recipient. Here, in the passage before us, he tells his readers that in baptism they had been raised with Christ **through faith in the working of God, Who raised Him from the dead.**

In what we have just said, reference has been made to the assertions and mutual criticisms of those upholding extremer views on either hand. A mediating view expressed in language of characteristic gentleness and appeal is put forth by Bishop Moule in his *Colossian Studies*. "Quite sure I am," he says, "that by St. Paul, and by the primeval Church generally, Baptism was not regarded as a quasi-miraculous operation, through which as an action, and necessarily at its time, a spiritual revolution took place within the recipient, or a spiritual spark was cast into his life. My deep belief is that the true apostolic idea of Baptism

was that of the 'sealing ordinance.' That view leaves absolutely free the Sovereign Spirit's action upon the soul, and the soul's action Godward in the simplest coming to Christ for life. But then it gives also, and at the same time, divine honour to Baptism. It makes it to the full, God's own Sign-manual to His Word, God's own Seal at the foot of His Charter of the Salvation which is by faith." [1] Col. ii. 11–13.

In baptism, St. Paul here tells his readers, they had circumcision and more than circumcision. Baptism means burial and resurrection with Christ; the old self dies to sin, the real and true self rises to newness of life, participating in His resurrection life. He says here swiftly, in a few chosen words, what he says at greater length in the earlier verses of Rom. vi. This dying and rising with Christ is made possible for us **through faith in the working of God, Who raised Him from the dead.** The God Who raised Him will raise us too with Him to the new life of righteousness.

It is to be noted that in the words that follow St. Paul varies the sense in which he uses the term "death." In the words we have just read he speaks of the Christian's death to his old life. Then he goes on to speak of that old life as, itself, a condition of spiritual death. Life, in its highest sense, means union with God. Sin breaks that union, separates man from God, and so results in death, produced by all those "trespasses" which are the individual and repeated expressions of the principle of sin within. This is no figurative expression, but a

[1] *Colossian Studies*, pp. 152 f.

Col. ii. 11–13.

dread and sombre reality. Men may be living and active in the world and yet spiritually dead. The trespasses are the outcome of **the uncircumcision of your flesh,** that is, the uncircumcision which consists in your flesh, the carnal, impure disposition by which you are dominated.

Life in Christ.

The God Who raised Jesus from the dead raised **you,** that is, the Colossian readers, from this death of sin. To the soul, dead in sin, the power of a new life is imparted in Christ. It is born again, or, as St. Paul expresses it here, God **quickens,** vitalises it in Christ and with Christ, so that with Him it rises to a new life kindred with His. The Christian, if we may so put it, must have an inward experience corresponding to the great redeeming acts of Christ. Christ died and rose again for him; he must die to sin and rise again with Christ.

Forgiven.

To this renewing, quickening process there is one indispensable preliminary which St. Paul does not omit: **Having forgiven us all our trespasses.** St. Paul says **us** here because he wishes to associate himself with those to whom he writes, as one who had been dead in sin and now has been raised by God with Christ. And what he says is, that the giving of new life in Christ is not the whole truth. It is, indeed, a glorious prospect for the future, but the past cannot be ignored. For the sins he has committed, the sinner is guilty. He needs not only help for the future, but pardon for the past, a free and full pardon that will cover all his sin. This need God has richly met in Christ. Christ "died for our sins." In Him "we have our redemption

through His blood, the forgiveness of our tres- Col. ii.
passes." It is when the barrier of unforgiven sin 11–13.
has been removed that the way is clear for quickening streams of life in Christ to enter and renew the heart. In writing to the Corinthians St. Paul simply said Christ "died for our sins." In Ephesians he connected the forgiveness with Christ's "blood." Here, in the words we now approach, he similarly connects the forgiveness of our sins with Christ's death upon the cross.

XII

THE TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS

Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross; having put off from himself the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.—Col. II. 14–15.

Col. ii. 14–15.

The bond in ordinances.

Here we have the actual historic fact that supplied the ground for the Divine forgiveness. That God in Christ freely forgives us we reverently and joyfully believe. St. Paul tells us what God did in and through His Son so that this free and full forgiveness might be available for us, "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." He **blotted the bond written in ordinances that was against us**. The word here translated **bond** meant originally any piece of handwriting, but had come, in usage, to mean a bond or note of hand. What is it that is so described here? The obvious answer is, "the law," using that term in its widest sense, including both enactments for ritual and moral requirements. The description is parallel with that in Ephes. ii. 15, "the law of commandments contained in ordinances." It may be that St. Paul has primarily in his mind the Law in its ceremonial aspect, which

was being pressed on his Colossian readers as the pathway to a higher life. But what he says here includes every aspect of the Law, its demand for righteousness of life as well as correctness of ritual, its menacing attitude towards the breaker of its precepts, its declaration of judgment and punishment. In virtue of these aspects, as he reaffirms here with emphasis, the Law is not only "against us" but definitely **contrary to us.** It fronts us and it sternly frowns at us. **Col. ii. 14–15.**

Is this a true account of its real character? Psalmists and Prophets delighted in it and extolled it. The writer of Ps. cxix. exhausts the resources of language in the effort to describe his abiding joy in its possession. St. Paul would not have denied the rightfulness of this so far as it went. But he had realised another aspect, the situation arising from a Law unkept and broken. The Law reveals to us God's Will and bids us obey it, but it does not provide us with the power to obey. The more we gaze on it, the more it reveals to us our duty unfulfilled, and our increasing guilt. It shows us, too, the punishment that must be our lot for its outraged majesty and neglected claims. So viewed, with all its holiness and goodness, the Law, to us, in our disobedience and sin, is sternly hostile. With all its extended array of decrees and requirements it is a **bond** that we cannot discharge. In face of it we stand bankrupt and condemned.

What has God done for us in this distressful plight? He has **blotted it out.** Not only so, but He has **taken it out of the way.** So far as it was an

Col. ii. 14–15.

obstacle to our approach to Him, He has taken it out of the path. The perfect tense of the verb here means that He has taken it away for good, never to be replaced. For He has nailed it to Christ's Cross.

It is a debated question how much St. Paul intended to convey by these words. Some think he alludes to a custom of cancelling bonds by driving a nail through them and fixing them up in public. There does not, however, appear to be conclusive evidence for the existence of such a custom, and the Apostle's meaning may be that the Law, like the flesh, was crucified with Christ; in His death it was done to death. As a force, hostile and opposed to us, it is no longer there.

So far, the sense of the passage is comparatively clear. But we come now to a sentence of which almost every word presents a problem to the careful reader. "**Having put off from Himself the principalities and the powers.**" Here the questions arise: Who is the subject of the verbs in this and the following clause? Is it God or Christ? What is the meaning of the verb, translated by the Revisers "having put off from Himself"? What beings are referred to by the terms, "the principalities and the powers"?

Answering these questions for the sake of clearness in somewhat summary fashion, we may say, that the demands of general sense and context seem best to be met by regarding God as the subject of the verbs throughout the passage. St. Paul is describing the work that He wrought in the crucifixion of Our Lord. The **principalities and powers**

would seem most naturally to have the same general meaning as in the passages in which the phrase has already occurred, that is in i. 16 and ii. 10. The term appears to indicate the angelic beings who figured so largely in the thought of later Judaism. In that thought these angels had been regarded as playing a mediating part in the giving of the Law to Israel. The mention of them in close connection with the statement that the bond written in ordinances has been nailed to the Cross, seems to show that St. Paul has in his mind here this connection of the angels with the Law. What, in effect, he says is : " These angels whom you are being taught to worship have shared the fate of that Law to which they ministered. So far as it was deposed and ended, when Christ was crucified, they were deposed and ended too. The true object of your worship is the crucified and risen Lord of Life. In worshipping the angels of the Law you are paying homage to potentates who are dethroned and dead." Col. ii. 14–15.

How has God treated them Himself ? He has completely disarmed them. He has despoiled them of such dominion as they ever had. This seems to be the meaning of St. Paul's expression here, and, if so, the rendering of our Authorised Version " spoiled " would convey it better in English. If our reading of the passage be correct, we have described the successive stages of God's victory in Christ over the Law and the angels associated with it. And the first stage in that victory is that these angels have been despoiled and dethroned.

Col. ii. 14–15.

The next stage is that He **made a show of them openly.** It has been thought that these words are intended to suggest the picture of a victor displaying his captives or trophies in a triumphal procession. The angels of the Law are not only defeated but openly displayed as captives. Others hold that no such exhibition in disgrace is necessarily implied. The expression simply means that the principalities and powers are exhibited, exposed, to the world in their true position of inferiority as mediators of an abolished law to which Christians have died.

The last stage certainly expresses the note of triumph, most probably that of the victorious commander returning from the war, though the interesting suggestion has been made that just as worshippers of Dionysus walked in festal procession in honour of their god, so these angels are portrayed as honouring God by acknowledging His greatness and the glory of His revelation in Christ. It seems, however, to give a greater unity to St. Paul's thought in the passage as a whole, if we hold that the idea is that of a conqueror who prevails over his foes, exhibits them as his subjects, and leads them captive in his triumphal train.

Triumphing over them in it, that is, in the Cross. There is the place of victory. The scene of apparent defeat is the place of triumph, a triumph won by His death. To the world the Cross appeared to be a scaffold on which a malefactor was done to death; to the loving eye of faith it is the royal car in which the conqueror rides in triumph.

XIII

THE SUBSTANCE RATHER THAN THE SHADOW

Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day, or a new moon, or a sabbath day: which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's. Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels, dwelling in the things which he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God.—Col. ii. 16–19.

Col. ii. 16–19.

The Cross.

The Cross of Christ holds the central place in St. Paul's thought here. Nailed to that Cross the Law has been cancelled; crucified upon it Christ has deposed the angels who were thought to be its mediators. To those who love and trust Him He has brought victory and freedom.

Christian freedom.

How will this freedom express itself in life? It will not permit the intrusion of ascetic practices or rules of ritual as the conditions of a higher life than can be found by simple trust in Christ. How these rules and practices were being suggested to his readers at Colossæ; what the real character was, both of the rules and of those who taught them, is indicated here in swift, firm, unsparing phrases.

Col. ii. 16–19.

Let no man judge you in meat and drink, or, as Dr. Moffatt renders it: "Let no one take you to task on questions of eating and drinking." The injunction is not so much one of lawful or unlawful foods, but of eating and drinking on the one hand, as against abstinence on the other. He is not thinking of ritual cleanness but of asceticism, inculcated as the necessary means towards a higher spiritual life. No Christian is liable to criticism on such a point as this. That the false teachers did actually lay down a code of ascetic rules seems clear from the allusion to "severity to the body" that comes a little later.

Another point in the propaganda of the false teachers was the observance of Jewish sacred seasons, annual, monthly, and weekly. With respect to these, too, St. Paul asserts the freedom of the Christian. They had had their place in the Divine economy in ages past; they had played their part in helping to prepare for the coming of the Christ. Now that He had come, their work was done. To insist again on their necessity for those who had entered on the freedom of His service was a return to an intolerable bondage.

The Sabbath.

It should be observed, in passing, that it is of the Jewish Sabbath that St. Paul speaks here, probably, with all traditional restrictions imposed upon it in later Jewish thought and practice. It would be a misapplication to refer his words to the Christian day of rest, the first day of the week on which Christians commemorated the resurrection of their Lord. There is nothing in St. Paul's words here

to preclude the careful observance of that day with loving reverence, though we may be sure that he would regard its observance as the satisfaction of a need for communion and worship rather than the meticulous obedience to a legal code. Col. ii. 16–19.

And this suggests a further thought. St. Paul does not, in the words we have just been reading, go so far as to attack either asceticism or the observance of sacred seasons *in themselves*. He does not, in set terms, demand their abolition. But he does claim absolute freedom for the Christian life. No Christian is open to criticism for total non-observance of them. To give them the place claimed for them by the false teachers was treachery to the gospel.

Shadow and substance.

He gives now his reason for the assertion of this Christian liberty by the contrast between the shadow and the substance, a contrast on which, it will be remembered, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews dwells at length. The matters to which he has been referring are **a shadow of the things to come ; but the body is Christ's.** Body, here, means that which casts the shadow. It is the reality of which the shadow is the pale and vague suggestion. The ordinances of Judaism are viewed as the shadow cast beforehand of the destined and approaching King. Insubstantial in themselves, as much so as the shadow wavering on the ground, they were still significant. They would not have been there at all if they had not been projected by the substantial reality that was approaching. The shadow was prophetic and aroused anticipation. But when

Col. ii. 16–19.

the King had come, the shadow was no longer there. He was present in bodily form in the fulness of His redeeming power. Surely it is a futile thing to go back again and seek painfully for the shadow when the substance has replaced it; to dwell upon the symbol when the reality is ours. To do so marks no progress in the Christian life. It is a pitiful relapse from genuine Christianity. Possessing Christ, the Christian possesses immediately all that might ever be vainly sought along the shadowy road of asceticism and ceremonial ordinance.

Worship of angels.

In the words that follow we have explicit information that the worship of angels formed part of the false teaching at Colossæ. **Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels.** The word translated "rob you of your prize" seems to have had a picturesque origin, somewhat forgotten in ordinary usage. It refers in the first instance to the verdict of the judge at athletic contests, a reference preserved in our usual English translation. It then seems, in usage, to have arrived at the general meaning of "decide," "give a verdict." The form of the word here implies an adverse verdict. Hence, what St. Paul meant to convey by his use of it may be expressed in English by, "Let no man decide against you," "pass sentence of condemnation on you."

We have, in the Greek, immediately after this verb, the present participle of the verb "to will," and it is not easy to be sure whether this participle is to be construed with the words that precede it, or with those that follow. Some scholars, including

Dr. Moule and Dr. Moffatt, take it with what goes before. Dr. Moule then translates it: "Let no one have his own way in robbing you of your prize." Dr. Moffatt's rendering is: "Let no one lay down rules for you as he pleases." Our Revisers, too, have given this rendering a place in the margin, substituting there, "of his own free will" for the rendering in the text. So interpreted the words are a warning to the Colossians against submitting themselves to the imperious injunctions laid down for them in autocratic fashion by those who were claiming to control their religious life. **Col. ii. 16–19.**

This participle, on the other hand, may be taken with the words that follow, and then we have the rendering of the Authorised Version preferred by our Revisers, and supported by many eminent English scholars. **By a voluntary humility.** It has to be admitted that the construction here is very unusual, so unusual, say some scholars, as to be impossible, and Dr. Hort, for one, proposed a very attractive emendation of the text, involving a slight rearrangement of the Greek letters. If we keep to the Greek as rendered by our English versions and try to extract the best possible meaning from it, what St. Paul appears to say is, that the teachers whom he stigmatises, are, in effect, if not in intent, impoverishing the Colossians, depriving them of their due, and they are doing so by **a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels.** By a voluntary humility he means a self-conscious humility, one that is not genuine; a humility that takes pride in its own abject demeanour, and **"A voluntary humility."**

Col. ii. 16–19.

so is not really humility at all. It is an attitude not far removed from that which modern Englishmen have learned to associate with the name of Uriah Heep.

How far this humility could go may be gathered from the words that follow. So humble were they that they did not dare to pray to God. They would address themselves instead to angels, that by *their* intervention, their supplications might at length reach God. "Such fantastic abasement," as Dr. Maclaren says, "which would not take God at His word, nor draw near to Him in His Son, was really the very height of pride."

Dwelling in the things that he hath seen. The Greek that lies behind these words has long perplexed the most able interpreters. So hopelessly obscure was it, as it stood, that some, including Bishop Lightfoot, were moved to have recourse to conjectural emendation of the text. It may now be said that the problem has been solved, and all need for emendation of the text removed, by recent archæological research. An inscription has been discovered at Klaros in which the word that St. Paul uses here occurs. Its bearing on our text has been fully investigated by Professor Ramsay. He shows[1] that the inscription had to do with some form of Mystery Religion and indicates that the inquirer, after being initiated, "set foot on" (St. Paul's verb here) and performed the entire series of rites. He holds that the word is a technical term connected with the usage of the Mystery Religions, and

[1] *The Teaching of Paul*, p. 287.

indicates the final ceremony, the setting foot on the threshold of the inner shrine, and the admission to the new life which the initiate is now to share with his God. St. Paul, apparently, quotes the word with sarcastic reference to the heretical teacher who was urging on the Colossians tenets connected with the Mysteries. He describes him as "taking his stand on what he has seen (in the Mysteries), vainly puffed up by his unspiritual mind, and not keeping firm hold on the Head." Col. ii. 16–19.

"Puffed up by his own unspiritual [lit. 'fleshly'] mind" indicates St. Paul's strong conviction that asceticism and angel worship, so far from assisting to triumph over the lower nature, were only, in the last resort, the instruments of that nature. With all his parade of humility the false teacher was really swollen with intellectual arrogance. And the root cause of all this was that he was **not holding fast the Head.** The only remedy for all these perverse and windy errors was closer union with and fuller understanding of Christ the Lord. It is neglect of Him, disparagement of His rightful claims that evokes St. Paul's trenchant language throughout this whole passage. He calls on the Colossians to make a firm stand, to resist the spiritual despotism to which they were exposed, not in the interests of any rigid individualism, not even on the ground of the dignity of their manhood, but in the interests of complete loyalty to Christ. Nothing is to be admitted that crosses the path of our direct access to Him, nothing that would to any slightest extent usurp His rightful place. To say "no"

Col. ii. 16–19.

with this intent is not simply negation. It is the glorious affirmative that for all our needs and all our aspirations Christ is " All in All."

Because He is the living Head, the body's welfare is only served by direct and living contact with Him. As such He is not only Sovereign, but also the very Source of life. The body knit together as an organic whole, **through the joints and bands,** depends on Him for unity and for life. The joints and bands are here regarded not only as the means by which the unity is secured, but also as the media through which life is communicated throughout the whole organism. But the Head is the ultimate source. Under Him and from Him, each part has its own particular function to discharge, its own contribution to the welfare of the whole to make. When this is done in happy and harmonious combination, in full dependence on the directing and life-bestowing Head, the body **increaseth with the increase of God.**

XIV

THE RUDIMENTS OF THE WORLD

If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances, Handle not, nor taste, nor touch (all which things are to perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; *but are* not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.—Col. ii. 20–23.

Col. ii. 20–23.

Dying with Christ.

It is one of St. Paul's cardinal thoughts that the Christian is one who has died and risen again with Christ; that what Christ has done for him must, in virtue of his union with Christ, be repeated in him as a matter of inward spiritual experience. If the question be raised: "To what does the Christian die?" St. Paul answers it variously; the variety of his answers corresponding to different aspects of the one great truth. The Christian dies to sin, to his old self, to the law, to the world. At first the death is potential, or ideal. It will be more fully realised as he shares more fully and realises more intimately the power of Christ within him. This indwelling power of Christ is all-sufficient, and the Christian enters on the experience

Col. ii. 20–23.

of it when he dies with Christ and rises from the dead with Christ.

In thought, the dying and the rising can be separately regarded. Here St. Paul makes reference to the dying, and what the fact must mean to the Christian who has died. In the following words, the opening ones of chap. iii., he dwells upon the rising and all that that great aspect of the truth implies for life.

If ye died. The tense of the Greek verb refers to the definite historic fact which took place once for all, to the moment of turning away from self and the world, to Christ with the outstretched arm of faith, in entire dependence on Him. When ye so died, says St. Paul, you parted from, you escaped from, the dominion of those **rudiments** by which your life till then was dominated. As we saw in our earlier thoughts about this word, its meaning is debated. Many modern scholars think that it refers to the elemental spirits, so that its significance is personal. So interpreted, the meaning is that when you died with Christ, you broke off all contact with, you ceased from all subjection to, these angels of the elements. The meaning more generally adopted by English scholars of the older school is that of "rudiments," the elementary teaching suited rather to childhood than to full-grown age, concerned more with the outward and material than with the inward and the spiritual. In the former passage we preferred this rendering, and we assume that when St. Paul here repeats the expression he means by it what he meant before. His reproach

is that having parted, by their death with Christ, from the elementary teaching and the preparatory institutions of the older world, they are deliberately undoing what has been done, they are losing all their gains, they are descending from the higher to the lower. In submitting to a yoke of ordinances they are returning to that world to which they died in Christ. Col. ii. 20–23.

The ordinances to which the new teachers are seeking to subject them are concerned with the material world. St. Paul quotes examples of their reiterated precepts: **Handle not, nor taste, nor touch.** These prohibitions are graded in an ascending scale of severity. The first one is general, "Do not take hold of"; the last is more minutely severe, "Do not touch with the tip of the finger." Asceticism, once entered on, makes ever-increasing demands. Like other kindred habits, it grows rapidly by indulgence. St. Paul's surprise that they can ever dream of submitting themselves again to such injunctions as these is swiftly expressed in the two following clauses. All these material things which men eat and drink, about which the teachers are laying down such rigid rules, have no permanent value and are of no importance. In the very act of being used they are destroyed. They serve the process of nutrition, and in serving it they disappear. How can they, in the very nature of the case, play any indispensable part in the promotion of a higher life? We may wisely use them; they cannot rule us. False asceticism.

And further, these injunctions about them do

Col. ii. 20–23.

not depend on any deeply founded spiritual principle. They are simply man-made things, **after the precepts and doctrines of men.**

There is a striking parallel between St. Paul's words here and those of Our Lord about defilement in St. Mark vii. The Apostle closely follows his Master's handling of the subject. Like Him, he dwells upon the perishableness of meats; like Him, he treats them as things indifferent in themselves; and like Him, he alludes, in the words "precepts and doctrines of men," to a passage in Isaiah. It is not improbable that what St. Paul says to his Colossian readers is based on the record of what Our Lord had said.

Certain features in these injunctions give to them a **show of wisdom,** a specious appearance devoid of true reality. In the first place, they present an appearance of devout and reverent worship. But it is such worship as men have devised and chosen, not such as God requires. It is self-imposed, officious, supererogatory service, the outcome of their own will, in fact, **will-worship.**

Secondly, they present the appearance of excessive humility, plausible but spurious; for they who use them will not respond to God's call to them, in Christ, to draw near to Him, preferring to interpose imagined angelic mediators between Him and them. Thirdly, their ascetic practices, involving as they do **severity to the body,** have a very specious **show of wisdom,** for they seem to mark complete subjection of the flesh to the spirit. But this, too, is wholly illusory. It is possible to practise the most severe

external austerities with heart and mind unstirred. In fact, the concluding charge against the whole massed system of ceremonial, prohibition, and angel worship is that it is **not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.**[1] By the "flesh" here is meant, not merely the sensual side of our nature, but the whole unregenerate personality, alien from and so often rebellious against His will. The only thing that can subdue and uplift it is the power of the indwelling Christ. To suppose that that needs any substitute or supplement is the vainest of all fond delusions, it is treachery to Christ our only Mediator, our Redeemer, and our sanctifying Lord.

Col. ii. 20–23.

[1] We have followed the rendering of the Revisers in our interpretation of these words. That rendering gives good sense in English and seems to form a fitting climax to what St. Paul has been saying before. Many, however, hold that the preposition translated by "against" cannot possibly have that meaning. In that case, we are driven to choose either one or other of the numerous alternative renderings, no one of which seems to give so good a sense as that adopted above; or to share the suspicion of Hort and other scholars, that there is in the text at this point some deeply seated corruption, the true rectification of which has not yet been discovered.

Effort.

XV

RISEN LIFE WITH CHRIST

If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory.—Col. iii. 1–4.

Not always true

Col. iii. 1–4. Risen with Christ.

We have already observed that in St. Paul's thought Our Lord's death and His resurrection are inseparably linked together. When he speaks of the death, he has the resurrection as the background of his thought. There is the same intimate connection in thought between the Christian's death and resurrection with Christ—his death to sin, the world, and his old self, his resurrection to the Spirit-filled life in and with Christ. In the concluding words of the last chapter he dwelt on the results of the dying with Christ, emphasising more particularly the emergence into an atmosphere of spiritual liberty, of emancipation from the limiting and galling restrictions of an older age.

The opening words of the present chapter pursue the theme in connection with the thought of resurrection. In a series of swift, clear, clauses, he

discloses the innermost ground and character of this new resurrection life, as lived here on earth and as consummated in glory. **Col. iii. 1–4.**

It is interesting to note that, at this point, the controversial portion of the letter ends. The Apostle has finished his conflict with the teachers of erroneous and disturbing doctrines. There is no further reference to them. He has exposed their fallacies and set forth the great truths about Christ which, in themselves, are exclusive of such error. He is now free to turn, without distraction, to his readers with loving exhortations for the practical conduct of their daily lives, with news, too, of the various friends, in whose welfare he and they were alike concerned.

His first injunction is practical and clear. It is to **seek** and to **set your mind** on **things that are above.** But he does not leave it unaccompanied. The "things that are above" are where Christ is. The strength to seek must come from Him, through participation, intimate and hidden, in His life. Even this is hardly sufficient to express the fulness of the truth. He actually is our life. To have Him is to live. Here and now, He *is* the hidden source and spring of life. But a day will come when He will be revealed to all eyes as the glorious Lord of life, and those who live in Him will also be revealed in glorious dependence on Him. For the living of the daily life, just as for the exclusion of erroneous thought, Christ is, for St. Paul, the All-Sufficient.

If then—as is, in fact, the case—**ye were raised together with Christ.** This, of course, is the funda- Life as a search.

Col. iii. 1–4.

mental presupposition. As the death broke off the old relations, the resurrection initiates them to the new: **Seek the things that are above.** Any earnest moral philosopher of St. Paul's day might have said these words, might have urged his hearers to cherish high ideals, to aspire after things pure and lofty. But the difference between St. Paul and them lies here, that the goal for him is personal. All these lofty, worthy things are to be found **where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God.** And this distinction, it may be confidently asserted, makes all the difference between the possible and the impossible. As Dr. Moffatt has well put it: "A person cannot be satisfied with "things," even with noble ideas and lofty aims. An impersonal atmosphere is too rarefied for the human soul. The Christian life is not a heap of moral excellences thrown down before us, for our mind and conscience to do the best they can with such materials; the supreme appeal is a personal life which gives body and charm to what would otherwise remain more or less intangible.[1] The **things that are above,** for the Christian, mean Christ, in all the richness of His Self-communication. The great glory of God's revelation in Him, as Dr. John Duncan has said, is that it has changed our abstracts into concretes. The Christ from Whom the Christian draws his life is **seated on the right hand of God.** He is not only risen, but ascended. To an Eastern mind this picturesque phrase would convey at once the ideas of rest and sovereignty. He Who had done and

[1] *Expositor*, Series VIII., No. 80, p. 136.

suffered to the utmost the Father's Will may rightly be regarded as reposing in the Father's approbation. But the idea of rest is supplemented by that of active energy. He Who sits on the right hand of the throne is the wielder and dispenser of all the kingly power. It is to this enthroned Master, sitting as in deepest rest, but working all the work of God, that the Christian is joined in mystic union by his faith. For as St. Paul has put it in Ephesians, God has "raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him, in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." [1]

Col. iii. 1–4.

But though the Christian's union with Christ, as St. Paul conceives it, may, not inaptly, be described as mystical, it does not evaporate and end in mysticism. It involves an urgent, moral appeal. It is just because, ideally, the Christian sits with Christ in His ascended glory, that he must always be "seeking" the things that are above. His life must be one of strenuous aim and effort in the upward heavenly direction. And as the necessary condition of this, St. Paul also bids his readers **set your mind upon** these higher things. The active search can only rise from a continuous, dominant desire. Your soul must be deeply set upon these treasures that are really yours, and all your efforts must be put out to gain them. The more intently your mind is set upon them the keener will be your search.

The ascended Christ, then, is the source of life, and the stay of life to His believing followers.

The hidden life.

[1] Eph. ii. 6.

Col. iii. 1–4.

And this life is, in a real sense, a hidden one. **Your life is hid.** When the Saviour's earthly work was ended He returned to the Father to dwell with Him in the glory He had with Him "before the world was." The world, for the present, sees Him no more. But the eye of faith sees Him, and the hand of faith is clasped in His. To outward seeming the members of the Colossian Church were in no sense different from their fellow citizens. They dressed alike, were housed alike; they shared in the intercourse of social and commercial life. But in the sphere of the inner life the difference was profound. To the Christians belonged experience, motives, aspirations, hopes, to which the others were entirely strangers. They were not their own; they had been bought with a price; they thought and acted in all relationships of life as men who are redeemed. The secret of their life belonged to that invisible and eternal order in which Christ is now enthroned. It was because they lived in heaven that they could really live on earth.

The term "other worldliness" is sometimes used with a sense of criticism and reproach, to indicate those whose gaze is so intently fixed on what is unseen and eternal that they are heedless of the needs and duties of our present work-a-day world. So far as this is actually the case, the reproach is not wholly undeserved. But there is an "other worldliness" which is no alternative to a life of strenuous practical service, but is, in fact, its ground and strong support. It is just so far as life is "hidden" with Christ in God that it can truly

display itself, without stint or weariness, in meeting all the world's needs for sympathy and service. **Col. iii. 1–4.**

But this experience of life in Christ will not always remain a "hidden thing." **When Christ, Who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also, with Him, be manifested in glory.** What is now secret and hidden shall, in God's good time, be openly declared. What has been "spoken in the ear in the inner chambers shall be proclaimed upon the housetops."

The manifestation in glory.

It is the deep conviction, not only of St. Paul, but of all the New Testament writers, that the consummation of Our Lord's work will be His personal return in visible glory. And the Christian, who through faithful union with Christ has shared in the experience of death and resurrection and ascension, will share in this culminating experience too; **then shall ye also with Him be manifested in glory.** The words are marked at once by triumphant conviction and by reverent reticence. With equal conviction and with equal reticence St. John has expressed his anticipation: "We know that if He shall be manifested we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is." "His name shall be in their foreheads." "His servants shall do Him service." What is now conditioned by struggle and imperfection shall then be free, unhindered, and glorious. The climax of St. Paul's highest hope for man is that we shall be with Christ in glory, realising the bliss of the life in which service and contemplation alike are perfectly expressed.

And the ground for this radiant hope is that He

Col. iii. 1–4.

is our life. St. Paul here goes as far as the resources of language will permit to express the deepest truth, the fundamental ground of all true Christian experience. It is something—and, in each case true, so far as it goes—to speak of Christ's teaching, of Christ's companionship. But there is more beyond. St. Paul knew that a man's personality, his self, must, in one sense, remain a distinctive thing. But he also knew that he himself was joined to Christ in such an intimacy of loving union as almost to transcend the limits of his personality, so that his own self was possessed and pervaded by Christ, and became the organ of Christ's life, rather than his own. "I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me." His words are the response from the side of human experience to the Master's word: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

XVI

THE THINGS TO BE PUT OFF

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, the which is idolatry; for which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience; in the which ye also walked aforetime, when ye lived in these things. But now put ye also away all these: anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth: lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him: where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman: but Christ is all, and in all.—Col. iii. 5–11.

If, before examining the precepts of this passage in detail, we pause for a moment to survey and state the general content of it, we may say that it is a direct application of the principles of Christianity, as St. Paul conceived it, to practical every-day conduct. The apostolic counsels are expressed first in a negative and then in a positive manner. The Christian is told in the most clear and detailed terms what he must not do; what states of inner consciousness, what modes of external behaviour are utterly incompatible with the Christian ideal. He is then made to see what is the positive principle

Col. iii. 5–11.

Col. iii. 5–11.

of the new life, a principle that is universally applicable and universally efficacious, the present power of Christ in the regenerate life.

It will be observed with what swift yet sure enumeration St. Paul sets forth the catalogue of things the Christian may neither do nor tolerate. Students of his letters will remember how in other places, more especially in *Galatians* and *Romans*, he sets forth similar catalogues of virtue to be practised or vices to be avoided. The point is worth attention because it serves to put St. Paul in living contact with one outstanding aspect of the age in which he lived. There were often to be seen about this time throughout what may be called, generally, the Hellenistic world, wandering teachers of righteousness, philosophers who forsook the lecture-room for the street or market-place, urging the practice of virtue on their fellow-men. The philosophy they expounded was a combination of the Stoic and the Cynic systems, resulting in a severe and lofty code with special emphasis on the virtue of renunciation, or, to put it crudely, how much you can do without in living the upright life. One of the characteristic features of the sermons or addresses of these wandering teachers was the tendency to set forth, as occasion demanded, long detailed lists of virtues or of vices. Tarsus, St. Paul's birthplace, was one of the chief centres of such teaching, and there is some attractiveness in the suggestion that St. Paul may have become familiar with this feature of the addresses to which he, doubtless, listened, and may, consciously or

unconsciously, have reproduced it in his own letters. His message, indeed, was a distinctive one, but so far as the *mode* of its presentment was concerned, he may not have been unwilling to adopt a style with which his hearers were familiar. It should, perhaps, be added that this matter of the catalogues of vices or virtues is not an isolated thing. It is only one feature amongst others, all emphasising the interesting parallel between St. Paul's style and that of these homely, earnest, philosophic teachers. Col. iii. 5–11.

Mortify, therefore. It is unfortunate, here, that the Revisers have elected to retain the Authorised Version translation of St. Paul's verb. The old word "mortify" hardly suggests to modern ears the meaning St. Paul wanted to convey. The translation of the American Revisers, adopted by Weymouth and Moffatt, is preferable: "Put to death."

"Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth." This phrase seems to refer to the slaying of all those evil passions and desires which have their roots in our bodily constitution in the gratifying of which our bodily members play some part or are immediately involved. A recent writer on the psychology of religion has expressed the need of such slaying in decisive terms. "There is a tendency for a strongly affective religion to degenerate into religious sentimentalism. Its exalted emotions cease to be spurs to heroic conduct for the love of God. On the contrary, the soul basks in its pleasurable emotions like a cat in the sun, as if the multiplication of emotions were the

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aim of its religion ; with the result at best of moral weakness, and at worst of moral disaster." [1]

The word **therefore** must also receive its proper weight of the force if St. Paul's exhortation is to be properly appreciated. It suggests the underlying reason. " Why," it may be asked, " should the Christian put to death his members which are upon the earth ? " And the answer is, because he is already dead and risen with Christ. It is a renewed expression of the constantly recurring Pauline paradox : " Because you are dead, you must put to death ; because you are risen, you must rise." To all the sins that stained your former life you are, in Christ, dead. That is, ideally, your state. Now you must realise it ; and, to do so, you must put these sins to death.

Creed and conduct.

Several thoughts suggest themselves as we read these words. Perhaps the first one that presents itself is, that conduct must correspond with creed, that the test of doctrine lies in character. To hold that one has died with Christ, and to make no effort to slay the sins to which one has died, is simply a contradiction in terms. The deep truths of the inner life are only truly held so far as they enter with prevailing power into the sphere of common life.

Then, secondly, the words imply that in the Christian's experience there is a negative as well as a positive element. There is something to be slain before the new life can truly grow. There is some-

[1] Thouless, *An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion*, pp. 69, 70.

thing to be put off, before the robe of righteousness can be put on. A man must first be taught and helped not to be what he has formerly been before he can really understand what he ought to be. St. Paul quite clearly held that evil must be eradicated before the good can hope to flourish. He did not hold that man is, in general, a being of excellent impulses who only needs to be told what is right in order at once to do it. He is fallen and he is stained; and the first step is that he should be raised and cleansed. Col. iii. 5–11.

Thirdly, his words imply that it is no light and easy task to which he calls his hearers. To "put to death" is not, in any case, a pleasant process. It needs a resolute determination on the part of him who undertakes it. The man who sacrifices some part of his body in order that he may save the rest requires some nerve and effort. But the task is even more exacting when what he is required to put to death are those passions and desires that have come to constitute his very self. It means cutting with a sharp blade into the inmost recesses of his being.

It is a great requirement that the Apostle makes; a very stringent injunction that he lays upon his Christian hearers. It would, in fact, be an impossible one, if it were not for the ground on which he bases it. It is only because with Christ we are dead that we can undertake any such putting to death. It is by the inspiration of His love and the power of His indwelling and enabling Spirit that we can actually put to death our old

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selves with all their earthward-looking lusts and passions.

What must be slain.

We come now to the list of sins on which St. Paul pronounces his first stern sentence of entire exclusion, indeed of swift and summary destruction. They are the sins that both in ancient and modern times have clearly emerged in human society where men have submitted to the unchecked sway of their lower nature, the flesh. The list, as we read it, appears to pass from the outward to the inward, from the stream to the source. It begins with impurity in action, **fornication,** by which word we may suppose St. Paul to include all forms of sexual immorality. It passes on to **uncleanness,** a more inclusive word, embracing every manifestation, in word or look, of the disposition of impurity. It then passes to **passion** and **evil desire,** the inward condition of heart and mind from which every outward display of impurity arises. The two latter words may be said to describe the inward condition from the passive and the active point of view. We speak of passion when we regard the mind as acted on from without, stirred to its depths by the attractions of seductive temptation. We speak of " evil desire " when we think of a man as actively longing for, consciously reaching out after, evil, taking the initiative in going to meet it. This is characterised as " evil " desire, for " desire " in itself is no wrong thing and can be directed towards worthy objects.

To these sins, which all appear to be concerned with the expression and gratification of sensuality,

St. Paul here links that of **covetousness.** That there was in his mind an intimate connection between "uncleanness" and "covetousness" is proved by the repeated occasions on which he associates them.[1] Various reasons for this have been suggested. It is generally true to say that impurity and greed were the two great outstanding sins of the pagan world of his day. And they were so, doubtless, in virtue of some inner connection. There is, of course, the obvious fact that the acquisition of wealth provided the means for the abundant gratification of lustful passions. But perhaps the real connection is more inward than this. They are really two branches springing from the same root of selfish absorption in material things, in all that is "of the earth, earthy." In youth, and in the prime of life, this absorption will reveal itself in the unchecked gratification of the flesh. In later age it will reveal itself in the grasping avarice of the miser. But they are closely akin in the spirit from which they spring, and where the one is, the other is not far off. In both cases there is the disposition to get rather than to give, to seize ruthlessly the means of self-gratification with no regard for the needs or claims of others. St. Paul is speaking with knowledge of human nature when he mentions "covetousness" in close association with "uncleanness." Col. iii. 5–11.

There is another ground, too, for his warning against covetousness, a ground which he mentions too in the Epistle to the Ephesians. It is the fact

[1] *Cf.* for example, Eph. iv. 19; v. 3, 5.

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that covetousness is **"idolatry."** Anything is "idolatry" that usurps the highest place in life that God alone should have, that becomes itself a god. Of nothing is this more true than avarice. The man who concentrates all his powers upon the acquisition of money ends by treating it as his only object of worship.

"For which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience." This clause, in the reading which the Revisers have adopted, is closely parallel to the words of Eph. v. 6. It contains a note of solemn warning. The things to which St. Paul has referred are not only sinful, and so, hideous in themselves, but they are attended by dreadful consequences. Upon those who do them "there comes the wrath of God."

"The wrath of God."

The wrath of God is a conception which some modern theologians are inclined to minimise or entirely explain away. It is treated as anthropomorphic, a crude and belated survival of primitive thought. The other truth that God is love has been welcomed, and so emphasised as completely to exclude the idea of His wrath.

It should be noted, however, by those with whom such considerations have weight, that it is an integral part of St. Paul's conception of God, and that it is equally integral in the Old Testament Scriptures from which he learned it. It is true that in the Old Testament we can trace a gradual spiritualising of the conception. What begins by being God's wrath against the enemies of His people becomes in the end His wrath against all

forms of moral wrong. The idea is really inseparable from that of God as personal and moral. It expresses the inevitable attitude of a holy personage towards sin. God would not be a holy God if the goodness or badness of men were indifferent to Him. It would be impossible to think of Him as the moral Governor of the universe. Col. iii. 5–11.

The term "wrath" when used of God must, of course, be guarded against misinterpretation. It must not be thought of as human anger, which is often passionate and malicious. The wrath of God is wholly free from any such admixture. It is a holy wrath. Neither must it be regarded as opposed to, or in any way inconsistent with, the Divine love. It is part of it, one necessary expression of it. It is because God loves the sinner so much that, towards him, as sinner, His attitude is one of wrath. To quote Dr. Maclaren again: "Instead of exalting, it degrades His love to free it from the admixture of wrath, which is like alloy with gold, giving firmness to what were else too soft for us. Such a God is not love, but impotent good nature. If there be no wrath, there is no love; if there were no love, there would be no wrath." [1] This Divine wrath, says St. Paul, "is coming." The probability is that he is referring more particularly to the impending judgment, the "day of the Lord," when God's doom on sin will be pronounced. In that case, the present tense implies prophetic certainty. The coming judgment is already on the way. There is, too, a very real

[1] *Expositor's Bible, Colossians and Philemon*, p. 280.

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sense in which the reference may be to this present life. The sins of which he has been speaking are often followed by their dreadful consequences in this world. The shattered health and ruined powers of one who has been enslaved to debauchery and lust are surely manifestations here and now of "the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience." The ruin and disaster that sin is seen to produce in the present order of things is a presage of God's final judgment on it.

"Walking" and "living."

In the which ye also walked aforetime, when ye lived in them. What is the force of the "also" here? It seems to mean, "You, who have now given these things up, as well as those who still practise them." The clause recalls the Colossians to the thought of that former life to which they, in Christ, have died. When they were living that life, it was in such sins as St. Paul has been describing that they "walked" when they "lived" in them. Does he mean the same thing here by "walking" and "living," or is there a distinction to be drawn?

The expression "to walk" is frequent in the writings of St. Paul and of St. John. It is probably Hebrew in its origin and expresses, picturesquely, the prevailing character of a man's practical life. It refers, that is, in the main, to conduct. "To live in," on the other hand, refers more particularly to desires and aspirations, as moulded by environment. We might paraphrase his words in some such way as this: "These sins often formed part of your daily conduct, at the time when desire for

them was kindled by the surroundings in which your life was spent." Col. iii. 5–11.

This reference to their former life is intended to point the contrast between it and the life they now are called on to live as members of Christ's Church, and at the same time to make clear the absolute impossibility of any persistence in the older ways. He who has died with Christ has no option but to "put to death" those former things. The gulf that separates him from them is as wide and deep as that of death.

All this contrast is summed up in the word **now** that opens out the next injunction. It implies all that goes to constitute their present life "in Christ" in contrast to the defilements of those former days of sin. There is, too, just as there was in the previous verse, an emphatic "also." This means, "You, as well as other Christians."

But now put ye also away all these. The metaphor, here, is that of putting off clothing. It repeats, under a different figure, the previous command to "put to death." "All these" is very inclusive in its scope. It appears to embrace both the list of sins St. Paul has already set forth, and the one on which he now enters.

If sensuality was the dominant note in the former list, malicious cruelty would appear to be the characteristic mark of this. It begins with the angry emotions from which such cruelty would take its rise, and ends with its various expressions in act, particularly in speech. **Anger** and **wrath** are the primary elements, the former word indicating

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more particularly the inner feeling, the latter, the outburst, the open display of wrath.

Few, if any, of St. Paul's warnings are more important than this in relation to the daily conduct of life. An angry disposition, as well as the liability to violent outbursts of wrath, are often regarded as matters of temperament, and so, pitiable but excusable. They are no more excusable than any other sins which the Christian must put off. The power of Christ can well avail to subdue and change an angry disposition. In this weakness, as well as in any other, is His strength made perfect, and the Christian whose life is marred by outbursts of tempestuous passion ought to see in this weakness a foe to be slain by the output of his Master's strength. Such anger, if allowed to spread and grow, will pass into **malice,** a settled, malignant disposition, that wishes harm and will take active steps to compass it. The attitude of cold and bitter hatred which this word suggests, implies appalling possibilities of poisonous malevolence.

And then there come the outward forms of its expression. The first of these is **railing,** meaning speech that is injurious; slanderous and destructive in its effects. Then comes **shameful speaking out of your mouth**—the copious flood of foul-mouthed abuse, in which, as St. Paul knew, an angry Oriental could vent his feelings. All these things the Christian, by one swift decisive act, must put away from him once and for all.

In the injunction that comes next, the present tense of the imperative mood is used, suggesting

that St. Paul is now laying down a continuous rule for daily life. **Lie not one to another.** Though lying is not peculiar to the Oriental, it is, at any rate, a marked characteristic in his dealing with his fellows. It is not hard to see how the persistence in this practice is ultimately destructive of any possibility of social union, and so, entirely incompatible with the love and confidence which should be the foundation of the Christian society. **Col. iii. 5–11.**

If we compare summarily these two lists of sins which St. Paul has marked down for abolition we may say that the first has mainly to do with animal passions, while the second has to do with speech. The spoken word, in every relationship of life, is very potent both to help and to harm. Few influences are more gracious in the world than that of sympathetic, kindly, gentle speech. On the other hand, a caustic, cruel tongue can produce incalculable pain and irreparable harm. A little thought will make it clear that if the sins that St. Paul here enumerates were wholly banished from our life, the cleansing process would involve a transformation that is almost beyond the reach of imagination.

Is all this a council of perfection? Is it simply a reiteration of those moral precepts which pure and lofty souls of earlier ages have laid down for the guidance of their fellows? No, the gospel, as St. Paul conceives it, includes this, but far more than this. It is the communication of a new power. For the expression of this we come back to the Apostle's familiar paradox, "It is because you have

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died, that you must die ; it is because you are risen, that you must rise." Or, as he goes on to express it here, " It is because you have already put these things away from you like a discarded vesture, that you must, in act and deed, put them away." Your old self to which these former practices were congenial is dead ; crucified with Christ upon His Cross. You have put on, as one puts on a new clean robe, a new self, a new personality to which these former sins are utterly abhorrent. This is your ideal standing. It needs the active co-operation of your will, assisted by God's grace, to make that standing real. It is because all these former practices are, ideally, dead that you must put them, in fact, to death. It is because they are abandoned that you must cast them off.

But it is because they have been so slain and abandoned in the crucifixion of your former self with Christ that you *can* slay them and cast them off. It is because He was crucified on the Cross *for* you that you can be crucified *with* Him. Every counsel of St. Paul's, for moral betterment, rests ultimately on the redeeming death of Christ. It is only the man who knows and trusts that Christ died for him who can crucify his former self and die with Christ, and so, rise with Him in the power of a new life. It is only the man who believes that Christ has removed the garment of his old life, and clothed him afresh in one that is new, who can himself with daily effort put off the clinging vesture of his former sins, and of the old self which practised them, to be clothed with the new self which is

always being renewed into closer likeness with Him Who has created and redeemed His child. **Col. iii. 5–11.**

Of this new self St. Paul says that it is not only new, but is constantly being renewed—not by himself, but by God's power working within him. The consciousness, on his part, of this power is a stimulus, not a sedative. It is because God is working in him that he must work too. It is because he is being renewed by God that he must strive with greater energy for renewal.

This Divine renewing is **unto knowledge,** that is, the outcome of it is an advanced knowledge of God. And the only road to this knowledge of God is growth into His likeness. The more we are like Him the better shall we understand Him. The renewing is, also, **after the image of Him that created him.** This is a clear allusion to the Creation narrative in Genesis. "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him." As in the first creation man was made in God's image, so too, in the new creation, the end of the whole redemptive process is the restoration of man's likeness to God, obscured by sin, but now revived and glorified by God in Christ.

For the Christian, so re-created in Christ, the sins of which St. Paul has been speaking are now impossible. Impurity, anger, and falsehood are incompatible with Christianity which has abolished not only the little lines of cleavage that might divide a small society like that of Colossæ, but even the deep distinctions that have divided mankind into hostile camps. The arms of God's redeeming

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love embrace mankind, regardless of all difference of nationality, ceremonial status, culture and social rank. **Where there cannot be. . . . Where** refers to the new man, the new nature. Wherever that is found it lives by the life of Christ. It is He Who dwells in all who possess that life. And He belongs to every soul that trusts in Him. There is no privileged class in His Church; no racial or intellectual aristocracy. The clefts that have so long kept mankind aloof from one another are now filled up in Christ.

Removal of barriers

of Race,

Where there cannot be Greek and Jew. Racial distinction is obliterated. That between the Jew and the rest of mankind had always been most clearly marked. **Circumcision and uncircumcision.** The difference of race was accentuated by that of religion. To the separations and animosities that spring from differing faiths and differing cults the history of the world's religions can bear abundant witness.

of culture,

The words **barbarian, Scythian**, are not in contrast like the first two pairs, but they form a climax. It may be that they are suggested by what had happened at Colossæ. The Greek looked on all those outside the circle of Greek culture as barbarian. The teachers at Colossæ in their efforts to impart a so-called higher wisdom may have caught something of this supercilious view, and they needed to be told that Christianity will have no compromise with this pride of culture. It accepts not only the "barbarian" in general, but the "Scythian," popularly supposed to represent the extremest form

of barbarism. St. Paul goes as far as the thought and language of his age will permit, in declaring that every member of the human race, however remote and however lowly in the scale, can experience the blessings of redemption, can put to death the past, can put on the new self, and live the resurrection life. **Col. iii. 5–11.**

From this triumphant declaration he returns again to his contrasts. This further one is that between **bondman** and **freeman.** Slavery was one of the most deeply founded institutions of the ancient world. As a system it held the possibility of unutterable cruelties. It could be administered, too, with mildness and kindly consideration. In any case it was a violation of the fundamental freedom that belongs to human personality. No consideration can justify the holding of man by his fellow-man as a piece of property, a living chattel. **of social rank.**

Christianity, it has often been observed, did not enter on direct warfare with slavery. Such a course, we may well infer, would probably have defeated its own end, involving the world in all the horrors of insurrection accompanied by the further horrors of reprisal. But, in a most effective way, Christianity has fought, and where it holds sway has extinguished slavery. It has done so by the creation of an atmosphere in which slavery cannot live. It has taught the worth and dignity of every human soul. It has established the brotherhood of men in Christ. In such an air slavery could not survive. It was bound in time to die a natural death. **Christianity and slavery.**

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St. Paul, here, is not speaking of its abolition. He accepts it as part of the natural order of things. But he declares that even the great gulf which separates bond from free is, in Christ, transcended and obliterated. It may be that at the time he wrote these words he was thinking on the application of the Spirit of Christ to the fact of slavery, which is enshrined for us in his private letter to Philemon.

To mankind as a whole, with all its deep and wide divisions of race, of creed, of social standing, **Christ is all, and in all.** He fully meets every need of heart and of mind that can arise in human experience. He enters into all the relations of life, controlling them to a unity in which all separating barriers are done away. "The triumph of the cult of Christ over all other cults is in no remote degree explainable by the fact that from the first Christianity took deep root in the heart of the many, in the hearts of men and women, old and young, bond and free, Jews, Greeks, and Barbarians. In its early days Christianity made conquest of hearts not because it was a 'religion of redemption,' as people are fond of saying nowadays, substituting the impersonal for the personal, but because it was the cult of a Redeemer." [1]

[1] Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, pp. 396 f.

XVII

THE THINGS TO BE PUT ON

Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye: and above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye were called in one body; and be ye thankful.—Col. iii. 12–15.

St. Paul has just told his readers that they have put on the "new man." They are in a new position and they have a new power. But the position must be realised and the power exercised in all the relationships of daily social life. So the command to "put on" is repeated; this time, with reference to a list of virtues, in striking contrast with the previous lists of vices to be discarded. **Col. iii. 12–15.**

The word **therefore** indicates the connection. It is a reiteration of the paradox to which we have so frequently referred. "Because you have put on, therefore, put on." Because you have put on the new man, put on these particular modes of conduct which are suited to the new man and expressive of his character. Because Christ is all in all, you must behave yourselves in such a way as

Col. iii. 12–15.

to promote that unity into which all Christians enter by possessing Christ.

Christians as "God's elect."

But there is a further reason still. You should do so because you are "God's elect." The word "elect" seems to revive the sound of ancient controversies, on which we need not enter here. It is a truth of the religious life, at once cheering and humbling to the Christian consciousness, that the Christian is where he is, and has what he has, because God so chose. St. Paul expresses it clearly in the opening words of Ephesians: "Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." Browning has caught the drift of his thought in the lines:

> Ere suns and moons could wax and wane,
> Ere stars were thundergirt, or piled
> The heavens, God thought on me His child;
> Ordained a life for me, arranged
> Its circumstances every one
> To the minutest.[1]

St. Paul's doctrine of election, for the individual, is that God chose him in Christ before the foundation of the world, and having chosen him, re-created him in Christ after His own likeness. If this truth be rightly grasped, what stronger incentive could there be to live worthily of God's loving choice?

Compassion.

We come now to an enumeration of the fair garments in which the new man should be clothed. The first is **a heart of compassion.** It is significant that this trait of compassion should head the list.

[1] *Men and Women.*

It might almost be called the most prominent feature in the demeanour of Our Lord. "He had compassion on them." St. Paul's heart, too, had a general sense of the woe, the disappointment, and the pain by which the life of men is beset. The same feeling inspired the lines of Virgil, "Sunt lacrimæ rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt." It was because he was so conscious of this widespread need that the first thing he bids his Christian reader "put on," cultivate, and practise is the attitude of loving, heartfelt sympathy. **Col. iii. 12–15.**

Then comes **kindness,** something slightly other than compassion and additional to it. Compassion is evoked by the world's need for pity. Kindness, or "kindliness," as Moffatt gives it, is the sunny, cheerful gaze upon the world at large, that springs from a heart of goodwill. Some have this brightness and geniality as a natural gift. But all can cultivate it, and St. Paul regards it as a primary constituent in the Christian life. **Kindness.**

These two things, compassion and kindliness, may be regarded as positive elements in the Christian's equipment. The remaining virtues in the list have to do with his demeanour under slights and injuries, and of these the foundation on which the others rest is **humility.** This virtue does not mean that a man should deliberately underestimate himself. He may be aware of his own strong points, of particular things that he can certainly do better than others, and yet may be a man of unaffectedly humble mind. He may have a clear appreciation of what is good in others too, **Humility**

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and he may have a just sense of his own entire dependence upon God.

Meekness.

Upon this foundation of humility must rest **meekness** and **long-suffering.** The distinction between these two words may seem to be a fine one, but it is there. "Meekness" is a quality which Our Lord enshrined in His benedictions in the Sermon on the Mount. It is also the quality He put first in His description of His own gracious attitude to men: "I am meek and lowly in heart." It is the attitude of mind that accepts without resistance anything that God may see fit to impose, or any injury He may permit men to inflict. "Long-suffering" is rather the attitude of self-restraint, of keeping one self in hand to prevent any outburst of anger or reprisal, however legitimate the occasion might seem to be. Perhaps the distinction may best be expressed in Dr. Maclaren's words, that while "long-suffering" does not get angry soon, "meekness" does not get angry at all. Moffatt's renderings, "gentleness" and "good temper," may be taken to point in the direction of this distinction.

Long-suffering.

Forbearing.

Forbearing one another, and forgiving each other. This is the carrying into action of meekness and long-suffering, and it may be that here too St. Paul intended to convey a slight gradation passing from the less to the more complete. It is a good thing and a Christ-like thing to "forbear" under stress of provocation, to keep from outward expression all the hot sense of injury that is pent within and striving to break out. It is a still better thing to

forgive, and so dismiss all sense of injury or irritation completely from the heart. **Col. iii. 12–15.**

Even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye. Here we have at once the pattern and the motive for the exercise of the spirit of forgiveness. We must forgive *as* Christ forgave, and we must do so *because* He has forgiven us. Possibly St. Paul has in his mind here Our Lord's parable of the Unmerciful Servant who, though he had been forgiven so vast a debt, was ready to wring the last farthing from a wretched fellow-servant. No stronger motive for forgiveness can be found than a deep sense of God's forgiving love in Christ; and, conversely, the absence of a forgiving spirit towards one's fellows would seem to indicate the absence of any true appreciation of God's forgiving love. **Forgiving.**

St. Paul has now enumerated the virtues which the Christian, living, with his new self, the new life, should put on. Still keeping to the figure of a garment, he indicates the girdle which is to come above them and bind them all together in one harmonious whole of clothing. That girdle is **love.** **Love.**

And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness. The word **above** here seems to be used in a literal local sense. Over all the other garments is to be put the sash or girdle which will link them into fitting unity. There is some debate between commentators as to the exact grammatical relation of the words in the sentence and there are corresponding varieties of interpretation. It seems to be in general harmony with the figure that St. Paul is employing, to regard love as

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the bond which binds these various virtues together into the whole of Christian perfection. When all these virtues are present, with love as the combining and connecting link, you have the full flower of the perfect Christian life.[1]

Peace.

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye were called in one body. The Greek word, here translated "rule," meant, originally, to act as an umpire, to give the necessary decision that might be called for in games and contests. It is a question how far, in usage, it lost this primary meaning, and simply meant "to rule." Perhaps so much of the original significance may have remained that it implies decision between two contending courses of action, and the meaning here may be, whenever you are drawn in opposite directions and are perplexed, let the peace of Christ—the peace which He has given you, His own peace—have the deciding voice. Do not tolerate anything that would violate it, do not enter on anything that would mar its serenity. Let it be supreme.

One body.

To the which also ye were called in one body. In these words we have the reason why we should cultivate and should accept the ruling of the peace of Christ. It was the very purpose of God's gracious call that we should enter into this peace and share it. And we have been called "in one body." It

[1] Some (of whom Dr. Moffatt, in *Expositor*, Jan. 1925, may be taken as a representative) hold that the idea is not that love unites all these other graces, but that these graces are the expression of love, and St. Paul is simply summing up their common spirit.

must rule not only in our hearts, but in our relations with one another. The rule of Christ's peace within our hearts will knit us as members to all other members of His body, and will ensure the harmonious expression of all the graces of the Christian social life that are girdled into unity by love. Col. iii. 12–15.

And be ye thankful. St. Paul can never contemplate unmoved the thought of all that God has done and does do for men in Christ, all His forgiving love and all His uplifting grace. And when the thought, with all its glory, overmasters him, he breaks out into a doxology or word of thankful praise. Some such feeling here prompts this interjected outburst. "When you think of God's forgiveness, which you may imitate; of His love which is the embracing girdle of your life; of the peace of Christ which may rule within your heart and in all relations of your daily life—if only you grasp and realise all that is so yours in Christ, what feeling can you have but one of unqualified, adoring gratitude? Be ye thankful. Become thankful as you realise your riches, and be ever becoming more thankful as you understand them better." Thankfulness.

XVIII

THE WORD OF CHRIST AND THE NAME OF CHRIST

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God. And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.—Col. iii. 16–17.

Col. iii. 16–17. "The word of Christ."

The note of joyous thankfulness rings on throughout this passage, a thankfulness that is, first and last, concerned with Christ. **Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.** The Christian who would enjoy the peace of Christ must always be devoted to His word. His "word" would seem, most naturally, to mean the gospel, including possibly the Old Testament Scriptures which testified of Him, and the story of fulfilment as realised in Christ and promulgated by His messengers. All the great truths about God and man, sin and redemption which form the gospel, are the "word of Christ." It is His word because He both lived it and taught it. It is also His because He is Himself the sum and centre of it.

When St. Paul bids us let it dwell in us, he is exhorting us to action. The indwelling depends

on us. We should do with the word of Christ just what we should do with any other words if we wish to profit by them—we must ponder them, dwell on them, fix our thoughts in concentrated attention on them. A man should strive not only with all his heart, but with all his brain, to enter by intense and loving study into the great truths on which his faith is built. The need for this is often underestimated, in the interests of "evangelistic" or "philanthropic" work. But the omission is bound to work disaster in the end. Christian action, to be truly fruitful, must be founded on the apprehension of Christian truth. **Col. iii. 16–17.**

The word of Christ should not only dwell in His followers, but do so **richly.** Here, again, the fulfilling of the condition depends upon the Christian himself. If his thought about the word be slight and shallow, he can have no reasonable expectation of any light or power. If he dwells upon it with the loving zeal that he bestows on any form of study to which he is truly devoted, he will be rewarded by the fulness of it richly present.

The following words, **in all wisdom,** present a slight problem. It is not quite easy to be certain whether they should go with the words that precede, and so be connected with the indwelling of Christ's word, or whether they go more naturally with the exhortation to teach and to admonish. In either way a good sense is obtained, but possibly the order of the words is slightly favourable to the former alternative. On that assumption, what St. Paul says is that the indwelling of Christ's word, if that

Col. iii. 16–17.

word be studied with careful and reverent thought, will issue in a wisdom capable of meeting any problem of thought and life that may arise.

But the indwelling word will express itself not only in the gift of wisdom to the heart that welcomes it, it will also express itself socially in the worship of the Church. The words throw an interesting sidelight on St. Paul's conception of some aspects of early Christian worship. Assembled Christians are to **teach** and **admonish** one another, the former word indicating more particularly doctrinal instruction, the latter practical exhortations coupled with any necessary warnings. Mutual instruction given in free and open conference is what seems to be described, and the description harmonises with what is depicted in the fourteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

"Teaching."

"Admonishing."

Sacred song.

It is especially interesting to note the part that is to be played by sacred song. It is to be not only the glad expression of thankfulness, but also the means of instruction and admonition. Its various modes are quickly glanced at. **Psalms** means words of praise sung to a musical accompaniment and probably refers chiefly to those of the Jewish Psalter. **Hymns** are the vocal utterance of praise, and probably refer to devotion that was distinctively Christian—the first glad outpourings of gratitude to God in Christ. **Spiritual songs** will include all that is Christian in spirit, other than what has already been described as "psalms" or "hymns."

We shall do well, here, to realise St. Paul's exalted

conception of the part that may be played by Christian hymnody. It must, on the one hand, be a real expression of the word of Christ. It must be based on and expressive of religious truth. If it be so, it is then no mere outburst of sentiment or of religious emotion; it is a real and helpful method of conveying Christian teaching. There are many—and those by no means always the most simple or uncultivated—who will welcome and retain truth so melodiously and harmoniously conveyed, to whom the homily or lecture would make a less convincing appeal. In view of all that Christian song, so used, can do, the provision of a worthy Christian hymn-book is one of the most responsible tasks the Church can undertake.

Col. iii. 16–17. The place of song in worship.

The hymn-book in which words of truth are joined to melodies that most suitably accompany them is a most effective aid to Christian devotion. But the main thing, after all, is the spirit in which it is used. St. Paul, therefore, indicated the primary requisite for all true Christian song: **Singing with grace in your hearts unto God.** There is always the danger of some externalism when worship is expressed in music, the risk that the music may take precedence of the worship. The correction to this is that the song should rise from a heart that is warmed by Divine grace, and, so, aglow with thankfulness.

And what applies to song applies to life at large. **Whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.** Every relationship of daily life is hallowed for the Christian. It is

Col. iii. 16–17.

significant that St. Paul includes "words" as well as "deeds" in the area of our doings. And he is right in this, for words are often some of our most effective deeds and are attended by a corresponding responsibility. For all our actions, viewed in this inclusive way, the touchstone is "the name of Jesus." All must be done in loving submission to His authority; nothing must be dreamt of that would mean treachery to His cause or disobedience to His sway. All must be done, too, in dependence on His help. If life be so controlled and so assisted it becomes, in every trifling detail, a thing of grace and beauty. Every deed becomes an act of thanksgiving. The thankfulness in song or deed is no mere uprush of passing emotion. It rises from dependence on God's redeeming love in Christ, from acceptance of His gifts of grace. The fruitful source of our obedience to God and service to our fellows is that we should ever be **giving thanks to God the Father through Him.**

XIX

THE CHRISTIAN HOUSEHOLD

Wives, be in subjection to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children, that they be not discouraged.

Servants, obey in all things them that are your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord: whatsoever ye do, work heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that from the Lord ye shall receive the recompense of the inheritance: ye serve the Lord Christ. For he that doeth wrong shall receive again for the wrong that he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

Masters, render unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.—Col. iii. 18–iv. 1.

This series of injunctions may be described as the application of Christian principles to the life of the Christian home. In St. Paul's day home meant father, mother, child, and slave. For each one of these he has a word of counsel, reminding each of his or her appropriate duty, with an accompanying reminder of the rightful claims of others. If, as we read it, the standard of conduct seems to be high and the requirements too exacting, it must be remembered that all he says is based upon the **Col. iii. 18–iv. 1.**

Col. iii. 8–iv. 1.

gospel. Without the gospel of God's love in Christ, and of His present and availing help, it would be impossible to meet St. Paul's demands. It is Christ "in you the hope of glory," and Christ's peace ruling in the heart that can make all members of a household live together in the joy of mutual love and service.

It is interesting to note, as we read the passage in detail, that in spite of obvious changes in social environment and in the conditions of domestic life, St. Paul's words are as applicable to Christian homes to-day as they were in the first century at Colossæ. It is of interest, also, to read this passage along with the parallel one in the Epistle to the Ephesians, marking the general similarity along with certain points of difference in detail. In *Ephesians* the instructions are fuller and provide something of a background to the briefer counsels here.

Wives.

Wives, be in subjection to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. The primary relationship in any home is that of the husband and of the wife, and St. Paul's counsel upon it is perfectly clear. The wife must be subject to the husband, and she must be so because the Christian ideal of marriage is thus realised. It is **fitting in the Lord.**

From the point of view of many modern thinkers this teaching is very unacceptable. It is regarded as an outrage on the dignity of womanhood. Marriage, it is held, should be an alliance upon equal terms without the faintest hint of any "subjection." St. Paul is thought to speak from the

limited point of view of a Jew of the first century A.D., and so allowance must be made for his restricted outlook. **Col. iii. 18–iv. 1.**

Before we accept these strictures on St. Paul, or even enter on the process of making allowances for him, certain points deserve consideration.

It should be observed, in the first place, that from the Christian point of view, man and woman are intrinsically equal before God, and that no one has given clearer expression to this than St. Paul himself. "There can," he says, "be no male and female: for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus."[1] In correspondence with this we see both in St. Paul's Epistles and in the narrative of *Acts* that women played an important rôle in the propaganda of Christianity and throughout the Christian communities.[2] This equalising of men and women before God produced a religious independence among women which may in some cases have tended to extend itself to the domestic sphere; so much so that St. Paul may have felt moved to recall the other truth of woman's proper subjection to her own husband. To him it seemed to involve no contradiction that a woman, as a human soul, should be on an equality with her husband in God's eyes, and yet that she should be subordinate to him in the relations of wedlock and of home. His view of these mutual relations comes out in the eleventh chapter of I Corinthians, when he says "the head of

[1] Gal. iii. 28.

[2] Harnack, *Mission and Expansion of Christianity* (E. T.), vol. ii. pp. 64 f.

Col. iii. 18–iv. 1.

the woman is the man," and adds, a little further on, that "the woman is the glory of the man." It is evident as we read the whole of this passage that his view is determined by the Creation narrative in Genesis. He holds that the position there assigned to woman is the one that she holds in the divinely appointed order. It is possible that in writing to his friends in Asia Minor the Apostle felt that this position needed to be reaffirmed in the interests of harmonious home life.

It should further be remembered how lofty is St. Paul's conception of the marriage bond. In *Ephesians* he sets forth his view that it is comparable with the union between Christ and His Church, carrying on the comparison even to this point of subjection: "As the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their husbands in everything." If the essence of the marriage union be so lofty and so spiritual as this, there can be no question of any subjection that would be humiliating or in any way unworthy. "In a true marriage, as in the loving obedience of a believing soul to Christ, the wife submits, not because she has found a master, but because her heart has found its rest." [1] Nothing that St. Paul says here is inconsistent with the equality of loving comradeship, or even with the husband's dependence on the keener instincts, the finer wisdom, the delicate perceptions of the woman's nature. It is, in the main, man's function to be the worker, the supporter, the protector, while it is woman's to sympathise, to cheer, and to

[1] Dr. Maclaren, *ibid.* p. 337.

inspire. St. Paul believed, both as a student of Scripture and of human nature, that, within the limits we have just surveyed, woman's place is one of subjection to her own husband (it is of marriage and the home that he is speaking); and there can be little doubt that his belief was rightly founded and permanently true. Col. iii. 18–iv. 1.

In this connection, and in relation to all other injunctions in this passage, St. Paul is giving his counsels in general and unqualified form. He does not take into consideration the possibility that the command of husband, or father, or master may come into conflict with the known will of God, and that so, a case of "conscience" might arise. In such a case we may presume that he would always counsel obedience to the higher call: "We must obey God rather than man" is a principle that should rule in the home as well as in the world.

Husbands.

We come now to the corresponding duty of the husband. **Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.** Here, again, the Apostle speaks as the discriminating observer of human nature, especially as displayed within the home. It might be said that if the husband loves his wife, that is in itself enough; no further injunction need be given. But the matter cannot be quite so simply expressed.

It is possible—and St. Paul may have observed it—for a man to love his wife and yet not be very loving in demeanour. Who does not know the man who can be bright and affable in public, but very grim at home? By his own fireside his manners

Col. iii. 18–iv. 1.

are, as it were, in "undress." He speaks according to his mood, without any effort at self-restraint or thought for the feelings of others and so can be exceedingly querulous and irritable.

> The man was angry with himself,
> With her, with all the world and much beside:
> And so the unseemly words were interchanged
> Which crystallise what else evaporates,
> And make mere misty petulance grow hard
> And sharp inside each softness, heart and soul.[1]

This way of behaviour can often coexist with Christian profession, and there can be exhibitions of "sanctified" bad temper which are exceedingly unedifying. In these cases it is often excused on the ground of "nerves" or "temperament"; but there is no excuse at all for the man who will work off on his wife the irritation that he would not, or dare not, vent on others. The old commentator, Bengel, defines the bitterness against which St. Paul here protests as "*odium amori mixtum*," "hatred mingled with love." It would, perhaps, be going too far to say that the irritable domestic tyrant hates his wife. But his love has certainly concealed itself behind a thick veil of unloving and unlovely conduct. Here, again, observation of the life around us provides abundant evidence that St. Paul is not uttering superfluous words when he bids husbands not only to love their wives but to "be not bitter against them."

Children.

Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing in the Lord. It is to be noted that

[1] Browning, *Red Cotton Night-cap Country* (iii.).

St. Paul uses the same Greek word to express the obedience of children and of slaves. In this connection we remember how very absolute was the *patria potestas*, the paternal authority in the Apostle's time. In theory, the head of the family had powers of life and death within his own household—over child and slave alike. It is not, however, on any such ground as this that St. Paul enjoins obedience in all things. It is a thing beautiful to see, and its beauty is owing to the fact of its harmony with the Divine ordinance. Dr. Moffatt quotes Ruskin's words in *Præterita* (i. 49) that recall the obedience of his own young days: "I obeyed word, or lifted finger, of father or mother, simply as a ship her helm; not only without idea of resistance, but receiving the direction as a part of my own life and force, a helpful law, as necessary to me in every moral action as the law of gravity in leaping." Words such as these have an archaic flavour now, but they harmonise with the Pauline counsel. Many a home is poorer to-day for neglect of the precept that children should in all things obey their parents. **Col. iii. 18–iv. 1.**

But fathers have their obligations too. **Fathers, provoke not your children that they be not discouraged.** A father may rightly expect obedience, but he will be much more likely to secure it if his own demeanour to his child is free from petty, worrying, unreasonable expressions of authority. The child who is always being provoked by trivial irritations will lose heart. If he feels that he can never succeed in pleasing his father he will cease Fathers.

Col. iii. 18–iv. 1.

trying to do so. The father who would have alert and loving obedience must know when not to blame and also when to praise.

Slaves.

Finally, we come to the mutual relations of servants and of masters. It must be remembered here that **servants** means slaves. We have already spoken of the relation of Christianity to slavery and need not now re-enter on the general topic. St. Paul here recognises, without any criticism, the existence of slavery as an institution and applies the principles of Christianity to its working. His words are, in general, equally applicable to those who work as freemen, and enter on their labour under the conditions of a free contract.

His first requirement is honest, conscientious service from the worker. There are no stated limits to this requirement, slaves must obey their masters **in all things.** And they must do so not only when the master's eye is on them, to win by busy activity his approval, but they must do so when his supervision is withdrawn and they are under no compulsion but that of their own conscience. St. Paul's contrasts here are quite clearly marked. Instead of working with **eye-service** they must work with **singleness of heart ;** and instead of being **men-pleasers** they must work as those who fear the Lord.

If it should seem that St. Paul is very exacting in the demands he makes on slaves for faithful service, it must be remembered that the Christian slave was treated by his Christian master as a brother in the Lord, and it may possibly be that

some were, not unnaturally, inclined to presume on this and become slack or disobedient. The Apostle makes it very clear that the relationships of Christian brotherhood did not exempt the slave from his ordinary obligations to serve; he rather glorifies this servile work by treating it as work done not merely for an earthly master but for God, Whose approval is bestowed on those who work with honest zeal, and Who will let no such work, however humble, go without its due reward. Col. iii. 18–iv. 1.

We have spoken of the Christian slave in relation to his Christian master. There would, of course, be countless other cases in which slaves belonged to pagan masters. To them also St. Paul's counsels will apply. They must do their appointed work as in God's sight, eager to win His approval and satisfied if it find favour in His eyes.

This must be the inspiring principle of all their active life. **Whatsoever ye do, work heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men.** To it is added the stimulus of a bright hope. **From the Lord ye shall receive the recompense of the inheritance.** The word **inheritance** is very significant here. It suggests the thought of sonship. However humble their earthly rank may be, and however arduous their toil, they are the redeemed children of God. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." It is that Christ with Whom they will one day reign, to Whom their service here on earth is rendered.

The concluding precept to slaves is a stern warning against neglect of duty. The Christian

Col. iii. 18–iv. 1.

slave—whoever his master may be—must not presume on his Christianity and think that God will overlook any idleness or sin. Possibly he might be inclined to think that on the ground of the hardness of his earthly lot, God would judge him by a less exacting standard, and might extract from this thought some licence to do wrong. St. Paul firmly represses the very beginning of such a thought. A man does not receive the right to break God's laws even if he has been ill-treated.

The last injunction is a brief but emphatic one to masters. **Render unto your servants that which is just and equal.** That is, give them treatment that is equitable. From the point of view of ancient thought a slave had no rights. He was simply his master's property, absolutely at his master's disposal. The Christian slave-owner is here instructed to treat his slaves as persons who have rights and claims that call for recognition. The rights and claims are not defined, but the principle is laid down. And if the master should ask for further information how he is to conduct himself towards his slave, the answer is that he must take Christ for his example. "What you are to your slaves," says St. Paul, "that He is to you. Think what you need from Him, and then so minister to their needs. Think what you hope to get from Him, and give that to them. As they have you for their master, so you have Him for yours. Let His love inspire you and instruct you how to do the duty of your station."

If throughout this passage we were to substitute

the word " workman " for " slave " and then apply it to the conditions of modern industrial life, it is interesting to speculate on all that might have been ; how much angry feeling would never have appeared, how many points of conflict would never have arisen, if master and workman alike had acted on the apostolic counsels. It is in obedience to the spirit of these counsels that the only hope of future peace and concord lies.

Col. iii. 18–iv. 1.

XX

THE INNER LIFE AND THE OUTWARD DEMEANOUR

Continue stedfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving; withal praying for us also, that God may open unto us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds; that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one.—COL. IV. 2–6.

Col. iv. 2–6.

THE series of counsels we have been considering may be said to apply to the Christian in relation to himself, the Church, and the family. In this paragraph that follows St. Paul quickly, but comprehensively, touches on life in its inward and its outward aspects; on the inner life of prayer and the outer life of contact with one's fellow-men. It is a standing problem for the Christian in every age, how to behave to those "that are without"; how, by act and speech, to commend to them the faith on which his own life rests; to let his own light so shine before men that they too shall glorify the Father Who is in heaven. The problem involves inward experience and outward conduct, and the Apostle touches on each of these in turn.

Continue stedfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving. The first requisite is that the Christian's inward life should be one of continued, watchful, thankful prayer. The verb translated **continue stedfastly** is used in various contexts and always with the idea of earnestness and continuity. Col. iv. 2–6. Continuance in prayer.

How is this counsel to be obeyed? How can the life of the Christian, who must, perforce, take his share of the world's everyday work, be one of unbroken prayer? The answer, partly, is that prayer is not only a separate action, but an attitude of mind, the attitude of one whose face, whatever work he may be doing, is turned towards God, whose heart is communing with Him and consciously depending on Him. Prayer, so construed, is possible for the Christian at all times and in all places. This, however, is not all. It would be a mistake to think of prayer as wholly expressed in this widely diffused attitude of devotion, without any specific utterance in word or act. In point of fact those whose attitude is such as we have described will be the most eager to secure regular and frequent opportunity for spoken prayer. They will value most highly the opportunity to be in secret with their Father and to speak to Him in prayer or praise.

Reality in prayer requires a conscious effort. That is why St. Paul adds the words, **watching therein.** There is always the danger that when a thing is done continuously the doing of it may become mechanical. The word "watching" implies wakefulness and concentration. The Christian

Col. iv. 2–6.

must be on his guard lest his prayers become the drowsy repetition of a formula. His mind should be alert, his attention roused and fixed.

Thanksgiving.

Not the least effective way to secure concentration and wakefulness in prayer is that the spirit of thankfulness should be there. Fervent prayer may well arise from consciousness of sin, a sense of need, but the most confident and happy prayer will rise from the thankful heart, mindful of all that God has done, trustful that "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all . . . with Him will freely give us all things"—not, it may be, all things that we ask for, but all things that He knows to be good for us.

Here St. Paul turns aside to strike a personal note. He has said that the basis of their life must be continuous, thankful prayer. He asks now that in this prayer he and his fellow-workers may have a special place. He and they have work of high importance to do. He knows that the intercessory prayer of his friends will be effective in strengthening their hands for the work. He is himself in bonds. He would, if God permitted it, be free, not for his own convenience, but to carry on the work. The work is **to speak the mystery of Christ**—the glorious open secret, that God has saved and will glorify all men in Him. It is for this that they are to pray for an open door, a clear way without let or hindrance, **so that,** he says, **I may make it manifest as I ought to speak.** What he asks for is grace to express all the riches of the gospel worthily, to speak with a voice so loving and so strong that the strength

and tenderness of God's love in Christ may be fully conveyed to all who hear him. Every true-hearted worker for Christ, great or humble, can enter into this desire ; the desire that the appeal of the gospel may not be hindered by the weakness of the preacher, but that he may be endued with power to proclaim the message in a way that is worthy of its greatness. **Col. iv. 2–6.**

It may be that the thought of what he so ardently desires for himself recalls him to his converts and their corresponding needs. They, like him, are light-bearers in a world of darkness ; they, too, represent Christ before a world that is indifferent, hostile, critical, and sometimes curious. How must the Christian behave himself in such surroundings ? His inner life must be one of increasing, thankful prayer. What must be his outward demeanour, especially to those who do not share his faith ?

Walk in wisdom, says St. Paul, **toward them that are without, redeeming the time.** The Christian must remember that he is a marked man, whose doings are criticised with reference to the profession that he makes. " A city set on a hill cannot be hid." Wise considerations of practical prudence must determine his demeanour. Loyalty to Christ will be the all-determining principle ; the application of this to the need of the particular moment may often be a matter of common sense and practical sagacity. **The Christian and the world.**

Some illustration of St. Paul's meaning may be got from the record of his own life. In matters where no fundamental principle was involved he

Col. iv. 2–6.

could be accommodating. But where confronted by those whose action sacrificed the truth of the gospel as he conceived it, he could say: "To whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour." It still remains a problem for the Christian to decide when the occasion admits of yielding and when it calls for unswerving firmness. In either case he must strive not to let the occasion pass unused. That seems to be the general sense of the words, **redeeming the time.** The more precise shade of meaning is debated by the commentators. Some interpret the words as, "making your market fully from the occasion"; use the opportunity to the full, buy it up, leave nothing of it unacquired and unused. This is Weymouth's rendering: "Buying up your opportunities," and the same thought seems to underlie Moffatt's, "make the very most of your time." Others take the thought to be that the opportunity has passed into alien hands and Christians must purchase it out of them for themselves, must get it back into their own hands, an idea sufficiently well brought out by the usual rendering, "redeeming the time." The former rendering seems rather more attractive and more in harmony with the context. The difficulty in the way of its acceptance is that there appears to be no clear evidence that the verb which St. Paul uses can have the meaning, "to buy up." But whether the precise idea be that of buying *up* the time or of buying it *back*, the general thought is clear that the Christian must always be alert to seize it, he must not allow it to elude his grasp and pass away unused.

"Redeeming the time."

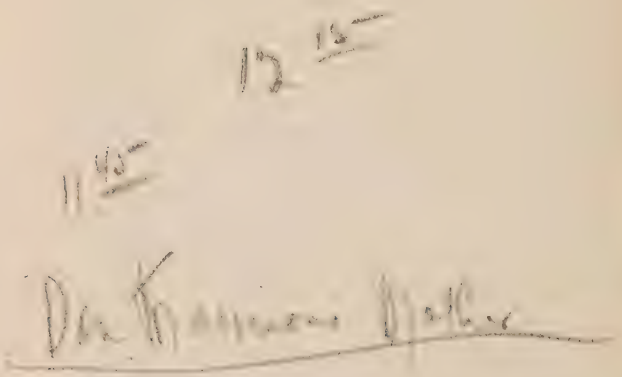
" Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one." Col. iv. 2–6.

There is again a debated question to be faced. Does " grace " here mean " acceptance," " pleasingness," meaning that by the sweetness and courtesy of their speech they are to make a favourable impression on these heathen hearers ? Or does it refer to the divine gift bestowed by the indwelling Spirit ? The latter seems more in accordance with St. Paul's general usage of the word. There may be times when the Christian cannot speak words that are winning and attractive. There can never be a time when his speech should not be controlled by the gracious and inspiring Spirit. His speech should always be with **grace.**

It should also be **seasoned with salt.** The reference here is to the seasoning, not to the preservative, power of salt. Your speech must not be insipid and flavourless ; it must have all the point and taste that will fit it to answer the question that each particular man may put. St. Paul here recognises the possibility that questions of religion may often be raised by the outsiders themselves. At Colossæ there might be much curiosity about the new religion that had been established in their midst. Questions might be put about its tenets, its rites, its points of difference from other faiths. To all such questions an answer must be given, in no ungracious fashion, but in speech flavoured by all the charm of aptness, kindness, willingness to give the information sought. If asked to talk about

Col. iv. 2–6.

their faith they must do so in such a way as to attract and not to repel. St. Paul's advice, of course, applies more widely than to the answering of questions. In all relations with those who are "without" the Christian's talk must always have a saving salt of grace.



XXI

TYCHICUS AND ONESIMUS

All my affairs shall Tychicus make known unto you, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord: whom I have sent unto you for this very purpose, that ye may know our estate, and that he may comfort your hearts; together with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things that *are done* here.—Col. iv. 7–9.

This section is concerned with two men, Tychicus and Onesimus. St. Paul describes the character and standing of each, with allusion, also, to the work he wishes each to do. **Col. iv. 7–9.**

Tychicus is mentioned in almost identical terms in the Epistle to the Ephesians, and the reasonable inference is that he was the messenger who carried the two letters from Rome to their respective destinations. He was commissioned also to give by word of mouth all detailed information about St. Paul's welfare and to answer all the anxious questions that might be asked. **Tychicus.**

He does not appear upon the scene of Christian life until we reach the later stages of St. Paul's work. He was a native of the Roman province of Asia, possibly from Ephesus, and possibly converted to Christianity during St. Paul's long stay in that

Col. iv. 7–9.

city. He is named along with Trophimus as representing Asia in the band of companions who were with St. Paul when he set out on his journey to Jerusalem. Of this band we knew that Trophimus certainly, and Aristarchus probably, accompanied him to Jerusalem. Tychicus is not specifically mentioned as being with him there, but there seems no reason why he, too, should not have accompanied the Apostle to the journey's end. Whether he was with St. Paul throughout, or only rejoined him at a later stage, he was certainly with him in the early days of his captivity in Rome, rendering to him personal service and helping in the work of Christian evangelisation. When a trusty messenger was needed to convey the two important letters to the Christians of Asia Minor, and to supplement their contents by information about personal details, it was Tychicus on whom the charge was laid.

Ephesians was an encyclical letter intended to go the round of a circle of churches, including those of Ephesus and Laodicea. When Tychicus reached the latter place, he would be within easy distance of Colossæ and so able to convey to the members of that Church the letter directly addressed to them.

St. Paul, with loving abundance of description, sets out what Tychicus had been to him and to the cause. He was a beloved fellow-Christian, he had rendered ungrudging service to St. Paul himself, and, like St. Paul, he was a bond-servant of Christ. The Apostle makes it clear that though Tychicus had acted as his personal attendant, they were

both on a footing of equality in their common service to the Lord. Col. iv. 7–9.

It is, then, as the companion, the attendant, and the messenger of St. Paul that Tychicus appears before us in the history of the Christian mission. We see in him one whose position was subordinate, but who in that humbler rank fulfilled a most necessary and important rôle. If it took the spiritual genius of St. Paul to write the Epistle to the Colossians, it also required the capacity and fidelity of Tychicus to convey it to its destination. The work done by Tychicus might seem, in comparison with St. Paul's, to be practical, matter-of-fact, almost secular in character. But it was a great work and a consecrated one, because it was done for Christ to help the founding of His Kingdom. To the gaze of the contemporary world he was insignificant enough; a humble wayfarer carrying with him two small written scrolls. And yet his little burden was a treasure that has enriched the world. What he carried to Colossæ has spoken, and still speaks, to all the races of mankind. No Christian worker, however humble may be his sphere, should underestimate or limit the use to which God may put his modest, faithful service. In serving the cause of Christ by loyal ministration to St. Paul, Tychicus was a benefactor not only to the Christians of Colossæ, but to the universal Church of every age.

In addition to the conveyance of the letter, Tychicus was to comfort the hearts of the Colossians by information about St. Paul's personal welfare.

Col. iv. 7–9.

The Apostle knew that the Colossians might be depressed at the fact of his imprisonment. He hopes that Tychicus will encourage them, by assuring them that his own personal hardships are no hindrance to the progress of the gospel, which is his main concern. He has already asked for their prayers, that he may be helped to use to the full every opportunity that comes his way. Tychicus must make it clear to them that what he needs is not pity but sympathetic prayer.

There may have been, too, one other item of comfort that Tychicus could convey. St. Paul, as we have seen, had probably never visited Colossæ himself, and so was personally unknown to the converts there. They might, not unnaturally, wonder whether he was really interested in people he had never seen, whether he really cared about them and their difficulties. Tychicus will tell them how intensely he does care, how they are ever in his thought and prayers, and so in this way too he will bring comfort to their hearts.

Onesimus.

In his journey to Colossæ Tychicus would be accompanied by Onesimus, the fugitive slave whom St. Paul was sending back to his master Philemon. Here we do not enter on the larger question of Christianity and the slave. We simply note the fact that St. Paul was sending him back. Onesimus, who had robbed his master and escaped from his service, had, in the course of his wanderings, come across St. Paul, most probably in Rome, and had been converted, through his ministry, to the Christian faith. As a Christian, the Apostle taught

him, his duty was to return to the master whom he had defrauded and deserted. To the Colossians in general St. Paul says no word of this. His commendation of the repentant and returning slave is contained in the private letter to Philemon. To the Church he is simply mentioned as "the faithful and beloved brother." To the place of his servitude he returns as a slave, but also as an honoured Christian brother. The episode is a striking example how Christianity at once accepted and ignored slavery. It encouraged no insurrections and set on foot no servile war. But, within the Christian society, the slave, as such, did not exist. He and his master were on a footing of equality as brethren in the Lord. Not only membership but ministerial rank within the Church was open to the slave.[1] It is clear, as we realise this, that slavery could not live alongside Christianity. In the atmosphere of Christian light and love the deadly thing was bound to die. If St. Paul was sending Onesimus back to bondage, he was also sending him to brotherhood, and he had no fears that the influence of brotherhood would not prevail.

Col. iv. 7–9.

[1] Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity* (E. T.), vol. i. pp. 168 f.

XXII

SALUTATIONS AND MESSAGES

Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (touching whom ye received commandments; if he come unto you, receive him), and Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision: these only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, men that have been a comfort unto me. Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, saluteth you, always striving for you in his prayers, that ye may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. For I bear him witness, that he hath much labour for you, and for them in Laodicea, and for them in Hierapolis. Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas salute you. Salute the brethren that are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church that is in their house. And when this epistle hath been read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye also read the epistle from Laodicea. And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you.—Col. iv. 10–18.

Col. iv. 10–18.
Personal messages.

The letter closes with a series of personal greetings and some detailed messages. An ordered arrangement of these is quite clearly visible. The first set of greetings comes from those of St. Paul's companions who are "of the circumcision"; the next is from friends who are of Gentile birth. The messages are concerned partly with the Church of Laodicea and the interchange of letters between

them and the Colossians ; partly with an injunction to Archippus about the due performance of his ministry. It may be helpful to think in detail of this little band of men, grouped round the Apostle in his imprisonment, and to recall what is known of the character and history of each of them. Col. iv. 10–18.

Aristarchus was a Thessalonian, possibly one of St. Paul's converts in that city, when he first carried the message of the gospel into Europe. He was with St. Paul in Ephesus at the time of the riot there, and was one of the two who were dragged into the theatre by the mob, as being well-known companions of the Apostle. He seems to have accompanied St. Paul to Palestine, for he started with him from there on the voyage to Rome. He was with him for the whole, or a part, of that journey, and certainly was with him after his arrival in the capital. Aristarchus.

St. Paul here speaks of him as his **fellow-prisoner.** The word employed means strictly a captive in war, and it is not quite certain whether St. Paul is using it with general reference to his imprisonment, or whether he wishes to suggest the thought that in the warfare of the gospel against the powers of darkness he and Aristarchus have both been taken captive and now are prisoners in the enemy's hands.

In either case it is interesting to note that in the Epistle to Philemon, although the name of Aristarchus occurs there, this particular epithet of " fellow-prisoner " is assigned to Epaphras, so that in whatever sense Aristarchus shared the conditions of St. Paul's imprisonment, Epaphras also did the

Col. iv. 10–18.

same. The suggestion has been made that St. Paul was permitted by the authorities to have as companion and attendant any one who might be willing to share the conditions of imprisonment with him, and that Aristarchus and Epaphras took turns in helping him both by companionship and by ministry to his needs. If we are right in supposing, as seems most natural, that the words " who are of the circumcision " refer to all the three preceding names, then we have incidental information here that Aristarchus was a man of Jewish birth who, like St. Paul himself, belonging to God's ancient people, had accepted Jesus as Messiah and as Saviour of mankind at large.

John Mark.

The next name is familiar enough in the history of the Apostolic Church. John, " whose surname was Mark," a cousin of Barnabas, came from a family that was eminent in early Christian circles in Jerusalem. He was selected to accompany Paul and Barnabas on the first evangelising journey for which they were commissioned by the Church of Antioch. When the journey was extended from the island of Cyprus to the mainland of Asia Minor he forsook the enterprise and returned home to Jerusalem. St. Paul was so deeply hurt by his departure that he would not consent to have him when another evangelising journey was being planned. Barnabas, however, stood by his kinsman, and, rather than abjure his company, parted from St. Paul, returning to the work in Cyprus. The intervening years seem to have brought with them a complete reconciliation between St. Paul and the

younger helper. John Mark is now with him in Rome, one of those who support him and are a "comfort" to him. It would appear from the Apostle's further words that a journey of Mark to Colossæ had been contemplated and might still be carried into effect. If it should be, he bids the Colossians welcome him. We do not know, with certainty, the reason for this exhortation. Some have thought that the recollection of Mark's former departure from the Apostle's company still clung about his name, and so his reception might be somewhat lukewarm. On St. Paul's part that is all forgotten and forgiven. It is quite clear that now he had come to seek for and depend on the company of his younger friend. For when the end was drawing near and he was alone with St. Luke, he wrote to Timothy entreating him to come himself and bring Mark with him, "For he is useful to me for ministering." Out of weakness Mark had been made strong. For his youthful failure he more than atoned by the loyalty of his later service. Col. iv. 10–18.

The third friend named is wholly unknown but for this one reference. It may be that his surname Justus indicates—as in the case of James, the first bishop of the Christian Church in Jerusalem—that he was a careful observer of all the requirements of the Jewish Law, possibly that like St. Paul himself he had belonged to "the straitest sect" of the Jewish religion and had passed from Pharisaism to the freedom of the gospel. Jesus Justus.

All these three were "of the circumcision," and

Col. iv. 10–18.

they alone, of his own countrymen, were St. Paul's fellow-workers. There is a touch of sad irony in the statement that so few of his fellow-countrymen were fellow-workers "unto the kingdom of God." The coming of the kingdom of God was the one great object of Jewish faith and life. It was tragic that when the King had come and the foundations of the kingdom were being laid, so few of those who were His own would welcome Him and enter on His service.

There were, indeed, those who had accepted Him and preached Him, but who disapproved intensely of St. Paul's distinctive teachings. They held that Jesus was the Messiah, but that all who would enter His kingdom must do so by the door of Judaism. Obedience to the requirements of the Jewish Law was necessary to salvation. The Epistle to the Philippians throws light on the activities of these Christian opponents of St. Paul's. They preach Christ "of envy and strife," thinking "to raise up affliction" for him in his bonds. It was hard for St. Paul to be a prisoner when such opposing influences were at work around him and the sense of the hostility of these men may have made him appreciate all the more the loyalty of the few who supported him and who, he said, had been **a comfort** to him. The word he employs was in constant use as a medical term, something like "cordial" or "tonic." He may have caught it from the lips of the beloved physician by his side, and used it to express the stimulus and strength that came to him from the support of his faithful friends.

We come now to the mention of Gentile comrades. The first of these is Epaphras. He was a resident in, possibly a native of, Colossæ, the first to bring the message of the gospel to the town. He had journeyed to Rome to tell St. Paul about the state of the Colossian Church and to consult him about the dangers that threatened it. The Apostle is especially careful in his message to make it clear how highly he himself regards Epaphras, and also how deeply and lovingly Epaphras is concerned for the welfare of his Colossian friends. His concern displays itself in prayer—continuous, wrestling, agonising prayer. The last word literally renders the word St. Paul uses. He "agonised" on their behalf, with strenuous, persistent supplication for their welfare in the Christian life. He prays that there may be no wavering, no deficiency, but that they stand with feet firmly planted, stedfast in the full assurance that God's will is their rule and guide and that in loyal service they are obeying its behests in every department of life. St. Paul was very conscious of this intense solicitude on the part of Epaphras for all the Christians in the Lycus valley, and bears emphatic testimony to it, in order that they all may know it and appreciate it too.

Col. iv. 10–18.

Epaphras.

The next Gentile friend is "Luke the beloved physician." The acquaintance seems, if we accept the testimony of the "we" passages in *Acts*, to have begun at Troas on the Second Missionary journey. It lasted to the end of St. Paul's life. Throughout the journey to Jerusalem, the voyage to Rome and the subsequent imprisonment, his

Luke.

Col. iv. 10–18.

faithful friend and doctor was his constant companion and unfailing friend. How loyal and how true that friendship was stands written for all time in that brief, pathetic sentence written shortly before the end: "Only Luke is with me."

Those two sentences, "Luke the beloved physician," "Only Luke is with me," cast a flood of light upon the tender, gracious personality. The Third Gospel that bears his name and the narrative of the Acts are such as might well come from one who was such a friend and such a man. It is interesting to think that when St. Paul wrote this letter there were with him two of the writers of our four canonical gospels.

Demas.

Demas, the third of the Gentile friends, is mentioned without further comment. In view of the later sad message to Timothy: "Demas forsook me, having loved this present world," it is not unfanciful to wonder whether St. Paul says nothing further here, because he has nothing good to say. It should be remembered, however, that in *Philemon* the Apostle mentions him, along with the other honoured names, as being a "fellow-worker." It is possible that the Apostle had already marked in him the first beginnings of a lukewarm spirit that was afterwards to result in departure and desertion.

He now transfers his thoughts from Rome and the companions who are with him there, to the Church of Laodicea some twelve miles from Colossæ. There are problems of reading and accentuation connected with the words, leaving it not quite certain whether the reference is to Nymphas, a Christian brother,

or to Nympha, a woman. Our Revisers have preferred the masculine form, and on this interpretation Nymphas would be a leading Christian of the city, in whose house the meetings of the brethren took place. We may suppose, in fact, that his position was similar to that of Philemon at Colossæ. Col. iv. 10–18.

St. Paul is anxious that the letter he has written to Colossæ should be read also by the brethren at Laodicea. But the Laodiceans were also in possession of a letter from him which the Colossians in their turn must read. They were, in fact, to exchange their letters. What was this letter that had come to Laodicea? There are convincing grounds for holding that it was the Epistle to the Ephesians. The theory is that this Epistle was an encyclical or circular letter, intended by St. Paul to be read by the Church of Ephesus, and then to be carried by Tychicus to a round of Churches in some specified area, not improbably the Roman province of Pro-consular Asia. Of these Churches, that in Laodicea would certainly be one. If this view be correct, we can understand the Apostle's instructions here. The brethren at Laodicea might naturally suppose that as the circular letter has come to them, they had no concern with one sent directly to Colossæ. The Colossians might suppose that as St. Paul had written a separate letter to them, they had no concern with the circular letter that had arrived in Laodicea. The Apostle here corrects both of these possible false impressions, and makes his wish clear that each group should

"The epistle from Laodicea.

Col. iv. 10–18.

pass its letter to its neighbour and should receive a letter in return. The Colossians were to read *Ephesians*, and the Laodiceans were to read *Colossians*. In the matter of practical counsels there was much in common between the two letters. In doctrine, each was complementary to the other; the one setting forth Our Lord's relation to His Church, the other His relation to the universe at large.

The ministry of Archippus.

The greetings finish with a word of warning: **Say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.** The message itself is perfectly clear, but we have to depend largely on conjecture for an understanding of the circumstances.

The opening words of the Epistle to Philemon are generally taken to imply that Archippus was the son of Philemon; and the description of him as St. Paul's "fellow-soldier" seem to indicate that he had co-operated in the work of the gospel with St. Paul, possibly during the period of his Ephesian ministry. The words of the passage before us indicate that he had received and was exercising a "ministry." This word has probably a general reference and leave it uncertain whether he was the presbyter of a local Church or had a wider commission as a missionary evangelist. On the former hypothesis of a local settled ministry the question is: Where did he exercise it, in Colossæ or in Laodicea? We cannot say for certain, but the general probabilities seem to point to Laodicea. The warning follows immediately on words concerned

with Laodicea, as if the affairs of that Church were still in St. Paul's mind. Also, the message is to the members of the Colossian Church, and it may be questioned whether St. Paul would put such a message into the lips of a Church to be repeated to its own pastor. If, on the other hand, they were instructed to give him this exhortation with reference to the work he was engaged upon in Laodicea, such a proceeding might not seem unnatural. To this, of course, it may be replied that if the Laodiceans were instructed to read the letter to Colossæ, they would, thereby, be made aware of the warning addressed to their pastor. Whether Archippus ministered at Laodicea or at Colossæ, it seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that the words were in the nature of a public warning. Col. iv. 10–18.

How far they may involve reproof is another matter. Some interpreters hold that no hint is given of any slackness on the part of Archippus. Others hold that he was one of those men who need occasionally to be prompted and to be kept up to the mark if they are to do their best. St. Paul assumes that he would listen, without resenting it, to the appeal of the community. If Archippus was exercising his ministry in Colossæ, and was called on to hear these words from the lips of his own flock, the assumption that he would do so without resentment was greatly to his credit.

Others, again, supposing that the work of Archippus was in Laodicea, have interpreted St. Paul's words in the light of the later happenings that are revealed to us in the letter to the angel of

Col. iv. 10–18.

the Church in Laodicea contained in the Apocalypse.[1] By that time the life of that Church had sunk to such a low ebb that the term "Laodicean" has become a synonym for slackness and carelessness in any cause. The message there is stern and clear enough. "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth." It is suggested that St. Paul had detected at Laodicea the first beginnings of this grave decadence, and so issued this warning in the form of an exhortation to its pastor. If Archippus were at fault the warning would be a timely stimulus; if the real fault lay in the slackness and worldliness of the Laodiceans themselves, such a message would strengthen the hands of their pastor in his efforts to deal faithfully with them.

The work of the amanuensis to whom the Epistle has been dictated is now finished, and St. Paul adds the closing greeting with his own hand. In doing the same thing at the end of the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians he adds the information that it is his general practice to authenticate his letters in this way: "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write." In the Epistle to the Galatians he calls attention to the largeness of the letters in which his own personal message is penned.

The adding of his signature here is attended by one most human and pathetic incident. In stretching out his hand to take the pen, he felt the weight of the chain with which he was bound. It may have

[1] Rev. iii. 14–22.

hindered for a moment the freedom of his action. Col. iv. 10–18.
He has said very little in the Epistle of his own trials and difficulties. He has preferred to dwell upon the majesty and glory of his Lord, and upon the needs of his Colossian friends. But the pull of the chain upon his wrist as he takes the pen to sign his name reminds him of his own estate; he is, for a time, a helpless prisoner. Tychicus may carry to them his letter. Epaphras may return to their midst. But he himself is held fast, a prisoner in bonds. He asks them to remember it; not to forget his captive state, but to think of him, in his chains, with loving sympathy. He asks them to **remember,** and the remembrance for which he asks is not simply that of sympathetic recollection, but of interceding prayer. He rejoiced to suffer for his Lord, but he yearned, too, for freedom to pursue his work. It gave him both joy and strength to know that those who loved him were mindful of him whenever they drew near in prayer to God.

Perhaps it was not easy to write encumbered by a chain. Perhaps, too, he was weary and overwrought by the toil of composing and dictating this Epistle. For whatever cause his words are short and terse. His apostolic benediction is compressed into the briefest possible form: "Grace be with you."

It is brief, but very comprehensive. Grace means the favour and compassion of God, His love for sinful men revealed in Christ. It means a richness of loving-kindness that meets our deepest need,

Col. iv. 10–18.

that crowns and satisfies our loftiest desire and aim. Its presence in the heart brings peace and rest. In praying that grace may be with them, St. Paul is expressing for his friends the best that he can wish.

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO TITUS

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO TITUS

I

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

The question of the authorship of the Pastoral Epistles is one of the most intricate and delicate problems of New Testament criticism; and though an exhaustive discussion of it is no part of the general aim of these devotional commentaries, a few words may be said about the chief factors in the problem and about the stage which the debate has at present reached.

The so-called "Pastoral" Epistles are I and II Timothy and Titus. Each Epistle is a "personal" one, in that it is addressed to an individual, and II Timothy is largely concerned with personal matters. But each Epistle is also "official," especially I Timothy and Titus; that is, it is concerned with the ministry and the administration of the Church, and was probably intended to be read in the hearing of the Church. The chief theme is the pastoral care of various Christian communities concerned.

The main question is, are these three Epistles the work of St. Paul himself, or are they the work of some later Paulinist writing in his name, at a considerably later date ?

The answers may be grouped under three heads. Firstly, there is the completely affirmative answer, which maintains that the Epistles as we have them, come from the hand, or at any rate from the dictation, of St. Paul. Secondly, there is the completely negative answer, which assigns the Epistles to the second century, on the ground that the situation they describe and their linguistic affinities belong to that period. Thirdly, there is the mediating answer, which maintains that the Epistles while not being the work of St. Paul himself, are the work of an immediate follower, living within the first century, who has incorporated into his work several fragments of genuinely Pauline letters.

It is worth while to recall briefly the considerations that should fairly be weighed when we try to make our own choice between these answers to the problem.

It should be noted, in the first place, that the *external* evidence for these Epistles is very strong. It is both early and abundant. Allusions to their language or direct quotations from it go back to the earliest times. In this respect they can well bear comparison with any of the other New Testament books.

The difficulties in the way of accepting them as St. Paul's belong entirely to the side of the *internal* evidence. We have, therefore, in the second place,

to take note of these. One thing would be generally admitted, that they stand or fall as Pauline writings with the hypothesis of St. Paul's release after his first trial, with an interval before his second imprisonment and martyrdom. If St. Paul was executed at the end of the imprisonment of which we hear in *Acts*, then the Pastoral Epistles cannot have been written by him.

There are, however, good grounds for maintaining that he *was* released after his first imprisonment, and so that there was a period in his life in which these letters could have been written.

When we come to survey the objections from the side of *internal* evidence to the Pauline authorship, we realise that the strength of them lies in their cumulative character. Any one of them, taken by itself, might not seem very formidable. But it is the accumulation of them that seems to make a strong case.

The case, however, can fairly be weakened if we can eliminate some of the points in it. It is urged, for example, that the organisation of the Church and ministry as depicted in these Epistles belongs to an age later than that of St. Paul. It may, with equal confidence, be asserted that the language, if rightly interpreted, reveals a situation exactly corresponding with that of St. Paul's later years. It is urged, again, that the erroneous teaching to which allusions occur is that of a later age. Here, too, it may be asserted that the errors referred to are, in the main, those with which the Epistle to the Colossians shows St. Paul to have been acquainted.

There still remain the difficulties connected with language, more particularly with the vocabulary used and the general style of the writing. These, it must be admitted, do constitute a serious problem. Statistics, with regard to vocabulary, it is true, are not very decisive. There is considerable variation of vocabulary in those Epistles which are generally admitted to be St. Paul's. Each of the groups into which those Epistles seem naturally to fall has its own distinctive vocabulary. The difference in language between the Pastoral Epistles and *Galatians* is little greater than that between *Galatians* and *II Thessalonians*. A good many of the words peculiar to the Pastorals, and unused in St. Paul's other Epistles, are to be found in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament. There are medical terms, too, which may have been suggested by St. Luke, who was probably with St. Paul, and who, indeed, may very well have acted as St. Paul's amanuensis. It has been pointed out that the vocabulary of the Pastorals approximates more closely to that of second-century writers, Christian and other, than it does to that of the earlier Pauline letters. Careful statistics may prove this, but it still remains possible that these second-century writers, so far at any rate as they were Christian, may have drawn their particular vocabulary from the Pastorals, which were first in the field. There were also many causes which might co-operate in producing a vocabulary somewhat different from anything that had gone before. St. Paul had had further experiences and had travelled over a wider

area since his first captivity. He was growing older, and at this stage may have aged rapidly. The strain and stress of his earlier life was bound to tell at the last. He may have depended more on his amanuensis, as he grew older, and may, to a greater extent than before, have allowed him to express the message in his own words. Then, too, we should bear in mind the particular character of all the letters, conveying instructions for the provision of a suitable ministry in particular localities. Such considerations as these go to show that a difference both in vocabulary and style may, not unreasonably, be expected.

And yet, with all this, not unexpected, difference, there are many points of connection with the St. Paul we know, the St. Paul of the *Acts* and the earlier Epistles. We see this particularly in the references to his own past life, in his employment of Old Testament language, his way of quoting from Rabbinical or Gentile literature. Most of all do we seem to be in touch with the real St. Paul in the personal allusions and injunctions. These simply could not have been invented by some other brain, however skilful. They are impregnably entrenched, in the Epistles, as certainly Pauline, so much so as to compel the hypothesis, held by many who are opposed to the Pauline authorship as a whole, that certain genuine Pauline fragments have been utilised and worked in by a later writer. But it may be roundly claimed that if these particular parts of the Epistles which touch on personal matters are admitted to be Pauline, then they carry with

them the remainder of the Epistles. The mythical Paulinist who has taken certain Pauline personal fragments, and inserted them into the fabric of ecclesiastical writings, is a very improbable person, the creation of critical brains reduced to rather desperate shifts.

If literary considerations alone entered in, the matter of vocabulary might, by itself, constitute a formidable obstacle to Pauline authorship. But the external evidence as to the early and widespread acceptance of the letters, the internal evidence of their contents, and of their style—especially when this latter is viewed in relation to St. Paul's age and circumstances—and particularly of the personal allusions, form a combination which, on the whole, has preponderating weight. The linguistic argument is by no means to be omitted or underestimated. But it is confronted by other arguments of such a convincing character that it cannot be said to have disproved the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals. In the exposition that follows we shall assume that we are studying the words of St. Paul.

Our discussion here has concerned itself with the outlines of the problem. In case any reader of these words should be moved to investigate the subject in a more exhaustive fashion, it may be of use to mention the more important works that are available for the English reader.

The arguments *against* the Pauline authorship will be found set forth in Moffatt, *Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament* (1911), and Harrison, *The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles*

(1922). The most thoroughgoing defence of the Pauline authorship will be found in Zahn's *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, an English translation of which (*Introduction to the New Testament*, Zahn) is published by T. and T. Clark. On the same side may be mentioned two books of the most helpful kind, but not quite so massive and exhaustive as those already indicated. One is *The Pauline Epistles*, by the Rev. R. D. Shaw, B.D. (T. and T. Clark), in which the problem of the Pastorals is set forth with lucidity, learning, and scrupulous fairness. The other is *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle* (Kelly), by the late Dr. Findlay, who with unhesitating conviction maintains the Pauline authorship.

II

THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF TITUS

Such knowledge as we have of Titus is gained entirely from St. Paul's letters. It is a curious and interesting fact that, although he plays a considerable part in the portion of St. Paul's life described in *Acts*, Titus is never mentioned in that book. The reason for this is, and will probably continue to be, a matter for speculation.

One suggestion has been offered, which, if it be accepted, would provide a reasonable explanation. The view has been put forward that Titus was the brother of Luke. If that were so, we might suppose that the delicate reticence of Luke, which excluded any mention of his own name in his narrative, other than the indirect reference of the " we " passages, excluded also any reference to his brother. If Titus was not the brother of Luke, then this particular explanation falls to the ground and the field is still open for other proposed solutions.

Titus was one of St. Paul's early converts to Christianity from the Gentile world. In this respect he differed from Timothy, who had a Jewish mother. Because of this connection with Judaism

St. Paul was willing, even desirous, that Timothy should be circumcised. But Titus, being wholly a Gentile, belonged to a different category. To have permitted him to be circumcised, with a view to his becoming a member of the Christian Church, would have been to surrender the very citadel of St. Paul's position in the Judaistic controversy. So Titus was taken to Jerusalem with Paul and Barnabas when they went up to discuss these points, as we are told in Gal. ii. 1, and neither then nor subsequently submitted to the rite of circumcision. He was one of the first-fruits of purely Gentile Christendom.

Further allusions to him show that he became a reliable and trusted ally of St. Paul. He proved himself a loyal and effective helper to the Apostle in one of the most trying experiences of his whole missionary career—his attempts to guide and govern the exceedingly intractable Corinthian Church. It must have required no slight degree of courage to go not merely as the Apostle's messenger, carrying letters, but as his envoy—to stay there in person and handle the thorny problems on the spot. But he went, and saw, and, apparently, he conquered; for he was able to meet St. Paul in Macedonia with cheering news. It was no inconsiderable personal triumph to have brought the lightheaded and conceited Corinthians to obedience to St. Paul, who had not spared them in the gravity and sternness of his language.

Another problem had to be faced at Corinth in addition to that arising from the scandals and dissensions of the Church—the problem of the

collection for the poor Christians of Jerusalem, a project in which St. Paul was deeply interested. Titus took a leading part in organising this. He was, as St. Paul says, "very earnest," and he took up this work at Corinth "of his own accord."

When we reflect on these incidents and the significance of them we are enabled to picture to ourselves the personality of Titus. He was evidently a "stalwart," a brave, reliable man, not only fearless and enterprising, but wise and tactful. St. Paul speaks of him as brother, and partner, and fellow-worker. In our Epistle he speaks of him as a true-born son, sharing a common faith. He evidently regarded him as a strong man, for there are no cheering and strengthening counsels addressed to him, such as are given to the younger and more timid Timothy. In the case of Timothy St. Paul's fatherly and protective instincts were aroused. He felt that Timothy depended on him, and in response to the appeal of his weakness, all the loving strength of the Apostle's nature was evoked to comfort and to strengthen. We can feel, as we read his counsels, how deep and yearning was his love. Titus, on the other hand, needed no such protective care. St. Paul evidently respected him, trusted him, held him in the highest regard, had for him the warmest feelings of approbation and confidence. But Titus did not lean and depend on the Apostle in the way that Timothy did, and it is perhaps just because of this, that in the Epistle sent to him there is an absence of that element of

protecting and cheering tenderness which is so evident in those sent to Timothy.

It is a further testimony to the strength and capacity of Titus that St. Paul left him to consolidate and organise the work of evangelisation in the island of Crete. We have no information about the first introduction of Christianity in the island. The fact is to be noted that "Cretans" are said to have been present in Jerusalem at Pentecost (Acts ii. 11). These may have formed the first beginnings of a congregation, but it hardly seems likely that anything in the way of definite and organised Christianity would be established till the arrival of St. Paul and Titus, some time after the Apostle's release from the first Roman imprisonment. For a period they co-operated in the work, and then St. Paul was called away. He was not afraid, however, to leave Titus in sole charge. The helper who had grappled so effectively with the difficulties at Corinth was just the man to face the most arduous responsibilities in Crete. The Cretans were less civilised than the Corinthians, and were, probably, in their own fashion, just as immoral. In both cases it was the national temperament that was the enemy. There was also an element of turbulence to be overcome, a rooted disinclination, socially and ecclesiastically, to submit to any control. There was also a tendency to indulge in wild fantastic speculations, coupled with a decided leaning to Jewish ordinances and superstitions. It was a prospect that might well appal any but the stoutest heart. Yet St. Paul left Titus here to

carry out the exacting work, and wrote the letter that bears his name to give him further directions and counsels about the doing of it.

We know very little about the subsequent history of Titus. St. Paul, in this letter, urges him to rejoin him at Nicopolis where he is proposing to spend the winter. We do not know whether this project was carried out, but we do know (2 Tim. iv. 10) that Titus was engaged, at a later stage, in missionary work in Dalmatia. If the Nicopolis referred to be that in Epirus, it would be a good centre for work in Dalmatia, and would also be within convenient distance from Rome.

At this point the Scripture references to Titus cease, leaving him still engaged in Christian work, not very far away from his chief and friend. Later ecclesiastical tradition depicts him living to an advanced old age as Bishop of Crete.

Such was the man, and such were the circumstances in which he was placed. It remains now to examine and reflect on the advice given to him by St. Paul as to the people with whom he had to deal and as to the right methods to be employed in building them up in the faith of Christ.

III

THE GREETING

Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal; but in his own seasons manifested his word in the message, wherewith I was intrusted according to the command of God our Saviour; to Titus, my true child after a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour.—Titus i. 1–4.

Titus i. 1–4. The Greeting.

These words represent the greeting of the Epistle, the formal salutation of the recipient by the sender. It has been already pointed out in the exposition of the Epistle to the Colossians that St. Paul, in this matter, conforms to the epistolary practice, the ordinary rules of correspondence, of his age; and the detailed illustration of the point need not be here repeated.

There are, however, one or two points in this particular salutation that claim our attention. In the first place, it is rather unusually long. It is not, however, unique in this respect among St. Paul's Epistles. The salutations of the Epistle to the Galatians and that to the Romans are of similar length. When St. Paul wished to utter at once something of primary importance about himself,

Titus i. 1–4.

his message, or his readers, he felt free to express it in his opening words. There is nothing the least un-Pauline in this somewhat elaborated introduction.

"A servant of God."

Another point to be observed is that the first words in which he here describes himself, **a servant of God,** are unique in our extant Pauline letters. Nowhere else does he employ this exact description. From his other letters we should gather that it was his more constant habit to call himself the "servant" of Jesus Christ. From a slight difference of this kind different critics will draw different conclusions. One very fair inference is, that a verbal difference of this kind supports the view that we have here a genuine Pauline writing. A later follower, wishing to produce a work that should look like St. Paul's, would have been careful, in this opening passage, to write words that would resemble a well-known Pauline greeting. He would hardly have been likely, in the very greeting, to employ a phrase distinct from anything known in St. Paul's other Epistles. The general inference is that such a variation as this is more likely to have come from St. Paul himself than from some one who was trying to write a letter that should look "Pauline."

The two points to which we have referred concern the *criticism* of the Epistle rather than the *exposition* of it. Our main purpose, however, is to understand, so far as we may, St. Paul's words and apply them to the needs of our present life. Perhaps the most convenient way to achieve this end will be to express in broad outline the gist of what the Apostle intends to convey, and then to dwell more particularly

on the separate words that he employs and the lessons that may be learnt from them.

It may, of course, be said that St. Paul's words are well capable of telling their own tale without any superfluous attempts to give the "gist" of them. We have, however, to remember that we, readers of the twentieth century, are dealing with an English version of a Greek letter written in the first century A.D., and that it is one of the primary documents of our religion. In that case, the attempt to examine the words used, to penetrate, so far as we can into the meaning they had for St. Paul himself, and so to realise more fully the meaning he wished to convey by them, is not wholly superfluous for the present-day English reader.

The contents of the greeting.

What thoughts, then, does St. Paul want to set forth in this unusually long salutation?

He defines very fully his own commission as an Apostle. He is, in a general sense, God's bond-servant, His "slave." The particular service that he is called on to perform in this capacity is that of being Jesus Christ's **Apostle,** His envoy and representative. His work as an Apostle is concerned with God's chosen ones, His **elect.** The object of it is to secure faith and apprehension of God's truth by them. The basis on which this work rests, and the thing which inspires it, is **hope of eternal life.** This hope is not an illusory one that will leave the Christian, in the end, disappointed and defrauded. God Himself, Who is the absolute Truth, **Who cannot lie, promised** this eternal life long ages ago, and **manifested** it in His own good time. This

Titus i. 1–4.

message of His to mankind He published abroad in a proclamation. To carry that proclamation out to the world has been the supreme task of St. Paul's life. It is a message of salvation authorised by the God Whose will it is that fallen mankind should be raised and saved.

St. Paul, whose life has been glorified by the splendour of this Divine commission, now addresses Titus, who is his true-born son in this Christian faith and hope. Just because he is his son, he will be inspired by the same motives and entrusted with the same commission. He shares both the dignity and the responsibility of his spiritual father. St. Paul will, later in the Epistle, give him fatherly counsels about the great work entrusted to him. Here, at the outset, he wishes for him the **grace** and **peace** that come from **God** as **Father** and **Christ Jesus** as **Saviour.**

Some of the phrases that come in this salutation have already appeared in the opening words of the Colossian letter; for example, "an apostle of Christ Jesus," and "grace and peace." Reference may be made to the exposition given of them there.

Here we may return for a moment to the phrase, **a servant of God.** The word "servant" literally means "slave." It is a word that is repeatedly used in the Greek Old Testament to express the relation of a prophet to Jehovah. He is the mouthpiece, the instrument of Jehovah. He simply exists to do His will. It is an analogous position that St. Paul claims for himself. Sometimes he calls himself the "slave" of Jesus Christ. Here he varies the

expression by calling himself the "slave" of God, performing his appointed service by acting as the Apostle of Jesus Christ. **Titus i. 1–4.**

Slavery is now a discredited institution, but the idea of the Christian as a "slave" is one of permanent value for Christian thought. It brings out, in the most vivid way, the conception that we do belong wholly, body and soul, to our Master. We have no will but His. We simply exist to obey His command. His possession of us is absolute and unqualified. The word enshrines a thought on which St. Paul delighted to dwell. He reached the ultimate expression of it in the words: "I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me."

He goes on here to speak of those to whom his commission to minister extends as **God's elect.** This, too, is a phrase that comes in Col. iii. 12, and we attempted, in the exposition of that passage, to realise what the thought of "election" meant for St. Paul's conception of the Christian life. We saw there that it is especially in the sphere of the religious life that the thought applies. It is written large across the pages of the Old Testament, where the dominating idea is the choice of Israel as a people to carry out God's purpose in the world; and, at a later stage, of Israel viewed as the Servant of the Lord, bringing salvation to the world of suffering. It may be that by his use of the word in this passage St. Paul wishes to convey the thought that the Christians to whom he writes are the true heirs of Israel; they have inherited from God's chosen people of old the privilege and the responsibility

"God's elect."

Titus i. 1–4.

of carrying God's message of salvation to the world.

The preposition in the Greek,—in the phrase "according to the faith of God's elect,"—rendered both by the A.V. and the R.V. **according to,** certainly has that general meaning. But several important commentators have questioned whether it has that meaning in this particular passage. In Phil. iii. 14 it is used to indicate the object arrived at, the goal "toward" which the Apostle presses. Instances of this usage can be found, too, in classical Greek. It certainly seems to give a better meaning to the passage before us to interpret it as saying that St. Paul's commission is to secure faith and apprehension of the truths of religion on the part of God's elect, than as saying—as A.V. and R.V. seem to render it—that the faith of the elect is the cause or the standard of his commission.

"Hope of eternal life."

Whatever be the right view of this passage there is no ambiguity about the words that follow. The basis on which all the apostolic work for God's elect ones rests is hope, **hope of eternal life.** The thought is a vast one. It includes both present and future, time and eternity, within its scope. To enter into that communion with God, which is the very essence of the life eternal, is the supremely desirable end, more than worth all the pain and toil that may be involved in reaching it. It is a hope that can cheer every prospect, and, as St. Paul has already said in Rom. v. 5, it is a hope that "putteth not to shame." It will not cheat us at the end. After relying on it all the way through we shall not be

exhibited as poor deluded simpletons at the last. It has behind it all the firmness, all the reliability of **God, Who cannot lie.** This strong and emphatic phrase occurs only here in the New Testament. It may be intended to assert in the most vigorous manner the truth about God, which makes His promise reliable ; or it may be used with conscious reference to verse 12. He there indicates that the Cretans live in an atmosphere of falsehood ; lying is their national vice. Because of that they may be, not unnaturally, cynical and suspicious in temperament. They may regard a promise, by whomsoever made, as a thing not to be depended on. But here is something entirely different. The Christians' hope, it is true, depends on a promise ; but it is God's promise. And He cannot, just because He is God, either repudiate His promise or fail to carry it out. **Titus i. 1–4.**

The promise is one that He repeatedly made and renewed in Old Testament Scripture. He fulfilled it when, in God's good time, Christ came. It is the fulfilment in Christ that is the theme of the apostolic preaching. Both St. Paul and Titus, who is wholly at one with him, in holding this faith and depending on this Divine promise of eternal life, are co-operators in the task of proclaiming this message to the world, and then of building up in the Christian faith those who have listened to and accepted the message.

IV

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that were wanting, and appoint elders in every city, as I gave thee charge; if any man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having children that believe, who are not accused of riot or unruly. For the bishop must be blameless, as God's steward; not self-willed, not soon angry, no brawler, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but given to hospitality, a lover of good, soberminded, just, holy, temperate; holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers.—TITUS I. 5–9.

Titus i. 5–9.

THE salutation ended, St. Paul proceeds to deal at once with the practical questions about which he is writing. He is well aware that his own comparatively brief visit to the island had left many important requirements unfulfilled. One of the chief of these is the provision of a duly appointed ministry to supervise and guide the various Christian congregations. To this task Titus must set his hand at once.

The task of Titus.

How these Christian congregations came into being we do not know. We have already referred to the fact that Cretans were present in Jerusalem and witnessed the happenings there on the first

Christian Pentecost. It is known, too, that there was a considerable Jewish population in the island, some of whom *may* have come to accept Jesus as the Messiah. **Titus i. 5–9.**

In whatever way Christianity had gained its first foothold in Crete, it seems to be a reasonable inference from St. Paul's language, in this passage, that it had been there for some time. Crete was an island of many cities. Homer, in the *Iliad*, had spoken of it as "Crete, with its hundred cities." When St. Paul tells Titus to appoint elders **in every city,** his words point to the fact that in, at any rate, a considerable number of them were Christian congregations that needed supervision. Some time must have elapsed to allow of such a state of things as this.

Again, in enumerating the requirements for an elder the Apostle speaks of a man's having children, who may either be believers and orderly persons, or who may be profligate and disobedient. This implies that they were, at any rate, old enough to think for themselves and to choose their own line; either to share their father's faith or to rebel against it. Here, too, the inference would seem to be that Christianity was a thing of some long standing. Again, it seems likely that the erroneous doctrines to which reference is made later in the Epistle are such as to have required some time for their full development. If Christianity had been recently introduced into Crete, the task of Titus would have been much simpler. The more carefully we read the Epistle the more do we realise how great were

Titus i. 5–9.

the difficulties he had to face. They were both internal and external. People who have grown accustomed to a certain way of going on resent being "set in order"; and the false teaching that had to be opposed was evidently strongly established. St. Paul needed a competent and trustworthy representative to do what was necessary. He probably felt that the man who had served him so well in the matter of the Corinthian Church was just the man to carry out his wishes here.

The words **For this cause** have a position of marked emphasis at the beginning of his injunction. Zahn has suggested that St. Paul is replying to a letter sent to him by Titus asking for advice on various points. This may possibly account for the full and almost official character of the opening salutation and for the emphatic opening of the present clause. St. Paul wished to fortify Titus, and strengthen his hands by the clear injunctions sent in this letter.

As we read these and the following verses we gain a deeper insight into the meaning of St. Paul's words: "That which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches." In his own lifetime the work of evangelisation had extended over a wide area. The need for pastoral supervision of converts was as great as the need for further evangelisation. He could not be everywhere at once. It was something, at any rate, that he could have such helpers as Timothy and Titus for so important a centre as Ephesus and such a difficult region as Crete, and we can understand the careful

emphasis with which he directs their respective actions. **Titus i. 5–9.**

There was much that needed doing in Crete, but the primary need, in St. Paul's opinion, was the provision of a duly appointed ministry to exercise pastoral supervision over these scattered Churches. The Apostle had seen this when he left the island, and had already directed Titus to undertake the work. **For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that were wanting, and appoint elders in every city, as I gave thee charge.**

Appointment of elders.

These are St. Paul's words as translated by our Revisers. In one, apparently slight, but not unimportant point, they differ from the rendering of the Authorised Version. The A.V. says "ordain elders." The R.V. says "appoint elders." "Appoint" is the better word, firstly because it more accurately represents the Greek word used by St. Paul, and secondly because the English word "ordain" inevitably suggests to our minds some particular rite or ecclesiastical ceremonial, and so imports a meaning into the Greek word which it does not really bear. St. Paul's command to Titus is to **appoint** elders.

If the question be raised as to the *mode* of their appointment, there is every reason to suppose that it was by the laying on of hands. Just as in Acts vi. the Apostles "appointed" the Seven who were to serve tables (the word there used is the same one as in this passage), and then set them apart by the laying on of hands, so here, we may suppose, that

Titus i. 5–9.

Titus would lay hands on those whom he had appointed. We gather from the First Epistle to Timothy that he, too, had been admitted to his office in this way, and that he was commissioned so to admit others.

The words **as I gave thee charge** are emphatic and important. The Apostle wishes it to be clearly understood that Titus in so appointing elders is carrying out his directions and acting with his full authority. The emphasis is so marked as to make us surmise whether there was some opposition to Titus in this course of action and whether St. Paul desired to support him by the assertion of his own personal authority. The words are quite emphatic enough to bear this weight of meaning.

Apparently the responsibility for choice and appointment lies with Titus. But, while there seems to be no hint at anything like popular election, Titus must be careful to select such men as will command general respect. The term " elder " was not merely an official designation, but probably implied that one who held the office should really have advanced in years ; so much so, that if he were the father of a family, his children should have reached years of discretion and be capable of independent action.

Qualities required for the office.

In addition, however, to the claims to respect which years can naturally bring, the " elder " should have others, and St. Paul here proceeds to enumerate them. His actions and his personal character must be such as to command general approval. There must be no glaring and obvious deficiency staring his

fellow Christians in the face, and evoking their criticism. Nor must there be any fault that would arouse the comment of those who were not Christians, and whose eyes would be sharp to detect a defect. He must be **blameless.** Titus i. 5–9.

St. Paul's words seem to assume that, as a general rule, the man selected to be an "elder" would be a married man. In this case, his relations with his wife and his children are naturally the first thing to which attention is directed, and the Apostle puts them to the forefront. He must be **the husband of one wife.** There is some ambiguity about these words, and the attempt to interpret them has given rise to much debate. It is agreed by all that they very obviously exclude anything like sexual laxity or polygamy. The elder must be the loyal and faithful husband of one wife. But do the words mean more than this? Do they exclude second marriage? Is a man, who has married again, after the death of his first wife, in St. Paul's opinion disqualified thereby for holding the office of "elder"? "The husband of one wife."

Whatever the words mean, they evidently represent what was, to St. Paul, an essential qualification, because they occur, in a similar context, in I Tim. iii. 2. The most natural interpretation of them seems to be that St. Paul, speaking of elders, advises against second marriage,[1] in order to avoid giving ground for criticism. It is abundantly clear that he did not forbid second marriages in general.[2]

[1] So, apparently, Moffatt: "Only once married."
[2] *Cf.* Rom. vii. 3; I Cor. vii. 9, 39; I Tim. v. 14.

Titus i. 5–9.

But he may have deemed it suitable to require from the elders of the Church a more exacting standard in this matter, especially in view of the circumstances of the age. Even in the Gentile world second marriages were viewed as a departure from the ideal standard. Possibly because of this, and possibly because of St. Paul's words in these Pastoral Epistles, early Christian writers and early Church Councils speak against second marriages, in general terms, with reference to the laity, but in stronger terms with reference to the clergy.

The question arises whether these words of St. Paul, even if limited strictly to the ministry, are to be regarded as permanently binding, as laying down a condition that is obligatory on the Christian ministry for all time; or whether they are to be regarded as an individual opinion, applicable to the time and circumstances in which the words were written.

A glance at the history of Christendom shows that there has been departure from them in various directions. The Roman Church has forbidden the marriage of the clergy absolutely. The Greek Church requires that bishops should be celibate. The Anglican Church and the Free Churches in general interpose no obstacle to the re-marriage of their ministers. It has obviously been the general sense of the Church at large that such a rule as this may be modified by circumstances.

The children of the elder.

St. Paul passes from the wife of the elder to his children. They must be **children that believe, who are not accused of riot or unruly.** The word that

is translated " believe " is somewhat ambiguous and constantly presents a problem to the commentator. The question is whether it has an active sense, as the above translation implies, and means that the children must share their father's faith, and be professing Christians as he is ; or whether it has a rather more passive meaning, and should be translated " trustworthy " or " loyal." Dr. Lock in his recent commentary prefers this latter interpretation. The A.V. rendering " faithful " might be taken either way, but, probably, means the same as " believing." On the whole, the R.V. seems preferable, as somewhat better suited to the context. Titus i. 5–9.

The children must, then, have made the profession of Christianity their own ; and they must not disgrace it. They must not be open to the charge of riotous living, nor must they be insubordinate and unruly. The man who is to be chosen as elder in the Christian Church must have given proof that he is able to control, guide, and train his own household. The necessity for this is indicated in the words that immediately follow :

For the bishop must be blameless, as God's steward. The Greek word (*episcopos*) here translated " bishop " refers obviously to the elder already mentioned. There can be no doubt that it is one and the same person who is referred to throughout the passage. The " episcopos " is one who is in charge of a particular thing, has the " oversight " over it. The word does not imply a different office, but it describes the functions of the elder. He was

Titus i. 5–9.

one who had the "oversight" over the portion of the Church committed to his care. The fact that the two words *presbyteros* and *episcopos* are related in this way to one another is one indication of the very early date of the Epistle. It belongs to a period before that in which the two words had come to have distinct meanings, indicating distinct offices.

The one who, as an elder, exercises oversight in the Church, must be **blameless.** Here St. Paul repeats the word already used, showing the stress that he lays on the general quality of absolute respectableness, of not being open to criticism. The phrase that follows tells us why this must be so. He is **God's steward.** The order of the words in the Greek shows that the emphasis is on "God's." The man who is appointed as an elder has to take part in the administration of a household, and that household is God's. All the expressions that follow sum up the traits which must characterise one who undertakes this important charge. He must not be arrogant in demeanour, riding roughshod over the feelings of others, heedless of any expression of their views. He must not be easily roused to anger and he must not be a **brawler.** This last word represents a Greek one meaning "over addicted to wine," and the margin of our R.V. follows this by translating it, "not quarrelsome over wine." It is possible that the reference to wine should be retained. But it is also possible that the word may have come to be used to mean "blustering" or "abusive," like a man who has taken too

"God's steward."

much. Our Revisers have preferred this latter alternative. Titus i. 5–9.

Further, he must be **no striker.** This is to be taken quite literally, though some of the Greek commentators give it a more extended meaning and take it to imply that the elder must not attack an opponent either with his fists or with bitter words. Nor must he be **greedy of filthy lucre.** This particular word is used with reference to deacons in I Tim. iii. 8, and is only found there, and in our present passage, in the whole Greek Bible. Its general meaning is to be guilty of making money in some discreditable way. An elder might do this who tried to suit his teaching to his hearers in the hope of making money from them, or who did not deal honestly with funds committed to his care, or who, for the sake of gain, persisted in some occupation that was not consistent with his Christian office. The warning implied in the word was no superfluous one, because the Cretans were notorious for love of money, and the office of a Christian elder would supply many opportunities for illicit gain if its holder were not entirely superior to any such temptation.

The vices from which the elder must be free have been enumerated, and St. Paul proceeds to indicate the positive characteristics he should possess.

In the first place, he must be **given to hospitality.** Hospitality in the sense of willingness to receive and entertain the brethren was a general duty of Christians, but more particularly of the elders who had oversight. As Christian communities "Given to hospitality."

Titus i. 5–9.

throughout the world increased, and intercourse between them developed, the duty of maintaining the connection by hospitable reception of travelling representatives would tend to fall largely on the more prominent officials of the Church.

The next expression used seems to enlarge the idea of the former word. He must be hospitably inclined not only to wandering Christian brethren, but to goodness in any form. The one word, **lover of good** (which only occurs here), may best be expanded by St. Paul's words in *Philippians:* "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

The words that follow indicate in swift strokes his duties in various directions. With regard to himself he must be **sober minded;** controlling his own thoughts, emotions, and instincts with wise moderation. With regard to his fellow-men he must be **just;** with regard to God he must be **holy.** Finally, he must be **temperate;** he must have that complete self-mastery and self-control which St. Paul in Gal. v. 22 places as the climax of the Spirit's fruits. He must be able to subdue all passionate impulses; he must keep his will loyally obedient to the will of God.

It is a very lofty standard that St. Paul requires from the man who would undertake the office of an elder, and there is only one way by which there

is any hope of its being reached. It is that he should always be **holding to the faithful word that is according to the teaching.** If he is to be a support to others, he must stand firm himself; and the only way for him to stand firm is to cling strongly, to hold firmly to the trustworthy teaching given by St. Paul, a teaching that agrees with, and is ultimately based on, the teaching of Our Lord Himself. Only as he submits his life to this and clings closely to it, may he hope to exhibit in his life the virtues that St. Paul has just enumerated. In this way, too, will he alone become fitted to fulfil the two main requirements of his pastoral office, to teach his flock and to defend them from assaults, **to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers.** **Titus i. 5–9.**

St. Paul has, hitherto, been speaking of the character that befits the Christian minister, and his words are specially applicable to those who are ordained to the ministry. They claim the reverent attention of the minister in all ages. They touch on his character; they touch on his demeanour in his own home and in the Church; they touch on the sacred obligations involved in his ministerial calling, both to teach his flock with sound, wholesome, healthgiving doctrine, and to protect them from the attacks of alien and hostile criticism. The minister who is seeking to revive his spiritual life, and to renew his vision of the ideals with which he entered on it, will be greatly helped by a careful study of the Apostle's words.

There is much in them, too, which Christians at

Titus i. 5–9.

large may well take to heart. The home, the family, the outer world of observant and critical folks, form the sphere in which most of us are called to live and to exhibit by our conduct the faith that we profess. Ancient Crete may differ in various points from modern England, but the essentials of the situation are the same, and a study of St. Paul's words here may remind us of the varied aspects of our duty and help us "to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."

V

THOSE IN CRETE WHO ARE TO BE REBUKED

For there are many unruly men, vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped; men who overthrow whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons. This testimony is true. For which cause rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men who turn away from the truth. To the pure all things are pure: but to them that are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. They profess that they know God; but by their works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.—TITUS I. 10–16.

Titus i. 10–16. "The gainsayers."

THE last requirement indicated by St. Paul for the Christian elder was that he should be able **to convict the gainsayers.** He proceeds now to describe these more fully. There was evidently so much error, and so much definite opposition to true Christianity abroad in Crete, that it was one of the first duties of the Christian pastor to face it and to deal with it in a firm and uncompromising way. The situation indicated by St. Paul's description appears to have been this. There were within the Church certain teachers, for the most part

Titus i. 10–16.

belonging to the ranks of the Jewish Christians, who stood forth, on their own initiative, quite independently. They were self-appointed and were unwilling to submit to any control. Not only were they quite insubordinate, but the teaching they gave was worthless in character. It was largely drawn from certain sides of the Judaism in which they had themselves grown up, and it was quite alien to the spirit of that Christianity they professed to uphold. It was disastrous in its results in more ways than one. It did not affect just an individual person here or there ; it wrought ruin in whole households. It also was infected by the spirit of money-getting. These teachers discovered that their teachings were so attractive, in certain circles of the Christian converts, that they used them as a method of gain by exacting payment for the giving of them. If the life and health of the Christian community were to be maintained, these teachers must be dealt with in summary and drastic fashion. Their mouths must be stopped.

Such was the general situation. We may be better able to realise it if we consider the words in which St. Paul sets it forth.

These men were **unruly.** They took their own way absolutely and acknowledged the sway of no controlling authority. Their persistence in such courses would not only lead the Church astray, but reduce it to utter anarchy. They were **vain talkers.** By this word, which he only uses here, St. Paul is possibly referring to the contemptuous language employed by the Jews about heathen teaching and

worship; and he means to convey that their own teaching was just as worthless as that which they themselves repudiated in others. From the point of view of the living of the Christian life, it was pointless and aimless. So they were **deceivers**—deceiving both themselves and those who listened to them. The phrase, **specially they of the circumcision,** indicates that they were Jewish Christians. They may well have been so, for there is abundant testimony that Jews formed an important part of the population of Crete. It was not an unnatural thing that they should form an important and influential element in the earliest Christian Church. They were the covenant people, from whom the Messiah had come, and their Scriptures enshrined the law and the prophecies which had made preparation for His coming.

A few lines further on St. Paul indicates something of the method and content of their teaching. Here, because he is so acutely conscious of the harm it does, he simply and sternly says that it must at once be brought to an end. **Whose mouths must be stopped.** The muzzle must be put on their lips and they must be silenced.

This must be so because the consequences of their action are so deplorable. They **overthrow whole houses, teaching things which they ought not.** It is in the sphere of the family that their trivial and disturbing teachings are having the worst results. For this reason, no doubt, St. Paul, both here and in *I Timothy*, lays such emphasis on the elder's control of his own household. It is there

Titus i. 10–16.

that the greatest harm is done, and it is there that he must eradicate it, if he is to have any capacity for dealing with it in the Church at large.

And the teaching they gave was not only harmful in itself, but it was apt to be given from an unworthy motive. They did it for pay, **for filthy lucre's sake.** A general and a particular cause may have lain behind this. It was a usual practice of the age for teachers to go from place to place delivering lectures or homilies for which they charged a fee. And the Cretans were notorious in the ancient world for acquisitiveness. The desire for gain was a temptation that lay very ready to hand. St. Paul has already said that the Christian elder must be free from the suspicion of it. He, here, roundly declares that the false teaching of these Jewish Christians was vitiated by it.

It is not quite a pleasing picture that the Apostle's words reveal. A number of self-appointed teachers, disseminating worthless doctrine, for a money payment, while foolish families receive it to their own destruction; lies spread abroad for filthy lucre's sake. That is the situation as he sees it. He feels that if he were to express it in his own words, he might appear offensive and provocative. So he avails himself of a quotation; a quotation which they could not resent, for it was taken from the words of a fellow-countryman of their own on whom their national pride was centred, and whose words about them could therefore be quoted without offence. "**Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, idle**

St. Paul's quotation.

gluttons." This hexameter line was attributed in antiquity to Epimenides the Cretan sage. Jerome assigns it to a poem called *Oracles*. Dr. Rendel Harris has discovered that a Nestorian commentator, Isho'dad, calls the poem from which it comes the *Minos*. It has been, however, on linguistic grounds, questioned whether this attribution of the line to Epimenides can really stand. **Titus i. 10–16.**

The lines were probably ancient, for such an attribution to have been made at all, for Epimenides lived in the sixth century B.C. A later poet, Callimachus, quoted part of the line in a poem that he wrote in honour of Zeus. He there calls the Cretans liars, not so much in general as in one particular and notorious instance. They cherished and promulgated a legend that they had in their island the tomb of Zeus. Greeks, who held Zeus to be the immortal father of gods and men, regarded this statement with peculiar aversion and roundly stigmatised the Cretans as liars.

St. Paul and classical literature.

The passage has a special interest because it is one of the only three instances we have in which St. Paul definitely quotes from Gentile writers. The other two are Acts xvii. 28, "For we are also his offspring"[1]; and I Cor. xv. 33, "Evil company doth corrupt good manners." It is one of the standing problems for those who are interested in

[1] Professor Rendel Harris suggests that the earlier words in this verse, "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being," may also be from the poem of Epimenides, from which the line about the Cretans is taken. It is questioned, however, whether the words are not too mystical in character to have been written at a date so early as that of Epimenides.

Titus i. 10–16.

St. Paul, to decide about his knowledge of classical or other non-Jewish literature. So far as actual quotation goes, the three passages that we have mentioned would not justify us in asserting for him anything like an extensive acquaintance with the Greek classics. Each of the passages is something in the way of a general maxim—something in the way of an ordinary current quotation. If a man to-day were to say: "The quality of mercy is not strained," or, "To be, or not to be, that is the question," it need not be inferred that he is a profound Shakespearean scholar with an exhaustive knowledge of the poet's works. So St. Paul cannot be said, on the strength of these quotations, to have had a wide and deep knowledge of the literature of ancient Greece. When we pass from definite quotation to possible allusion, the field is open for conjecture, and Professor Rendel Harris has opened a wide field of possibility by his ingenious suggestions, a field in which others continue to glean after him from time to time. He suggests, for example, that when the chief captain at Jerusalem asked St. Paul whether he knew Greek, St. Paul replied in words that were an adaptation of words in the opening lines of the *Ion* of Euripides (Acts xxi. 39). He finds a connection between the difficult words in Col. ii. 18, and a passage in the *Clouds* of Aristophanes. He takes a positive delight in enlarging the area of St. Paul's classical bookshelves. This occupation is a very delightful bypath of Bible study, and it may still reveal further possibilities. In the absence of positive evidence to the contrary,

it is perhaps most likely that St. Paul's culture was, in the main, Jewish in character, with possible influences, both on his thought and his style, from the side of the Stoic philosophy with which Tarsus, his birthplace, was closely associated. **Titus i. 10–16.**

The quotation we have been discussing makes it quite clear that he was in no way averse from using a Gentile passage if it suited his purpose to do so, and his example in this respect shows us that repudiation of anything that is good and great in the literary treasures of the world at large is no part of Christian culture.

His use of these, undoubtedly, trenchant words is quite Christian. It enables him to tell a plain home truth to the Cretans, and yet to rob it of any offensive severity, by putting it in the words of one whom they revered as their own poet and prophet. To his words the Apostle subscribes: **This testimony is true.**

For which cause reprove them sharply. Titus is himself to do the thing which he has already been exhorted to call on the elders to do. He must set them an example in the dealing with the demoralising methods and doctrines of these false teachers. His aim, however, in so doing must not be mere opposition, but improvement. Their faults are not so much of profession, but of practice. They profess to be Christian, but they debase the name by their conduct, and so their whole state is unsound. The reproof must be sharp, **that they may be sound in the faith,** that faith and conduct may be in healthy harmony.

Titus i. 10–16.

"Jewish fables."

The physician who is using severe measures with a view to restoring health must know exactly the nature of the malady with which he is dealing. St. Paul here indicates it for Titus. These teachers give **heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men who turn away from the truth.** The trouble was that these professedly Christian teachers were importing into their teaching alien elements, imitating both the methods and the matter of sundry Jewish teachers, and putting forward their imitation as an improvement on the gospel teaching of St. Paul and his friends.

By Jewish fables he probably means the legends about the heroes and others of the Pentateuch, which are to be found in the Apocrypha, and especially in such a writing as the Book of Jubilees. These legends are comprehensively indicated by the term *Haggada*, and would exactly answer St. Paul's description here, as Jewish fables. By commandments of men he probably refers to what are called in the Gospels "traditions of the elders," all the mass of detailed rules about meats and ceremonial washings—traditions that were intolerably burdensome and had no authority whatever but that of the men who invented them. By substituting these man-made puerilities for the gospel, these teachers are turning away from the truth. Just like the false teachers at Colossæ they were trying to suggest that a higher level of Christian life could be reached by insisting on the observance of these rules imported from the side of Judaism.

It is true, St. Paul admits, that to the pure all

things are pure. This aphorism, it is suggested, may have come from Our Lord's lips, and, taken in the abstract, it is generally true. But there are so many other circumstances that tend to modify it and limit its application. By purity is meant purity of heart; not such purity as could be obtained by ceremonial washings. But if the heart be impure it makes what comes to it impure also; and that was the trouble with these erroneous teachers. The trouble was a moral one. **To them that are defiled, and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.** The "unbelieving" here are the Jewish Christians who cannot believe that Christ is the end of the law, and so seek to gain a higher form of Christian life by requiring obedience to the law and applying its enactments in all manner of trivial and burdensome ways. They are not openly and professedly irreligious people. **They profess that they know God; but by their works they deny Him.** They deny Him, in life and conduct, because they are, as St. Paul has already said, "defiled," and in these following words he enlarges on the thought. They are **abominable.** He uses a word here which suggests a similar word employed by the Jews to express their horror of idolatry. They held it an "abominable" thing. St. Paul declares that they merit the epithet themselves. **Disobedient** refers to life and conduct; it means the expression of disbelief in active rebellion. **And unto every good work reprobate.** They should be instruments, ready to God's hands, for the purpose of carrying

Titus i. 10–16.

out His beneficent purpose of salvation; but, on the contrary, they are worthless, incapable of being employed for any such end.

For all these reasons their pernicious activities must be arrested. Their "mouths must be stopped," and Titus must do it.

VI

COUNSELS TO CHRISTIANS, OLDER AND YOUNGER

But speak thou the things which befit the sound doctrine: that aged men be temperate, grave, sober-minded, sound in faith, in love, in patience: that aged women likewise be reverent in demeanour, not slanderers nor enslaved to much wine, teachers of that which is good; that they may train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sober-minded, chaste, workers at home, kind, being in subjection to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed: the younger men likewise exhort to be sober-minded.—Titus ii. 1–6.

Titus ii. 1–6.

The Christian family.

The instructions that are contained in this and the next section should be compared with those in Col. iii. 18–iv. 1. In both passages the emphasis is on the importance of the home; on the supreme necessity, from the point of view of the Church, of Christian family life. What the life of the family is, the life of the Church will be. St. Paul dwells on this in *Ephesians* and *I Timothy*, in addition to our present passage, and that in *Colossians*. St. Peter also treats of it from a point of view similar to that of the passage before us—that is, more particularly, the effect of an excellent Christian home life on the world around. St. Paul's instructions need little explanation or comment. They carry their meaning on the surface. One thing,

Titus ii. 1–6.

however, deserves to be emphasised—their inclusiveness. The Christian ideal must be absolute. It must dominate all, elder and younger, male and female, parent and child, master and slave. No stage or condition of human life lies outside its scope. And a home, so controlled by the love and power of Christ, is an effective and convincing witness for Christianity, of unsurpassable force. The home is the primary sphere in which the Christian virtues are to be displayed.

It is true that due allowance must be made for the difference between the conditions in Crete in St. Paul's day and those of the present day. But when all such allowance has been made, it is very obvious that St. Paul's counsels on this subject are particularly appropriate to our own time and circumstances. One of the most disquieting features of our age is the decay of family life. The war seems to have left us with an appalling aftermath of conjugal infidelity, separation, and divorce. Home life, too, is seriously impaired by all the distractions of the time; the multiplied entertainments, the search for varied pleasures, the increase of motoring; all these tend to produce a restlessness, a superficiality which regards the older pleasures of the home as vapid and distasteful. There is, also, it will be generally admitted, a dislike of discipline, a craving for emancipation, a lack of restraint that is far removed from the older ideal of the Christian home. These features of the age do not mean progress and enlightenment; they mean deterioration. It is to be hoped that it is a

transient phase, and that the sanctities and the claims of the home will again be reasserted. Certainly, if there is to be a revival of religion in England, an essential part of it will be the revival of religion in the home; and when the home is in question, St. Paul's advice to Titus will claim renewed and careful study. Titus ii. 1–6.

After a word of exhortation to Titus personally, St. Paul proceeds to speak, in order, of the older men, the older women, the younger women, and the younger men. The dominant note in the whole passage is the exhortation to sobriety or sober-mindedness. Let us see how St. Paul approaches this. **But speak thou the things which befit the sound doctrine.** The " thou " here is emphatic and points the contrast with the false teachers on whose work St. Paul has just been enlarging. All their insistence on Jewish legend as well as on baseless distinctions about meats and drinks, times and seasons, is thoroughly unwholesome. They have so fastened the attention of their hearers on these trivialities that they have been led to suppose that if they were duly observed, nothing else matters, and the result has been that moral obligations have been forgotten and whole households ruined. To all this disastrous foolishness Titus must oppose sound, wholesome, healthy teaching. This must be the theme that is constantly on his lips, and he must distribute to the various classes in each Christian household the counsel that is appropriate to each, with an ever-recurring insistence on the need for sober-mindedness.

Titus ii. 1–6.

The aged men.

That aged men be temperate, grave, sober-minded, sound in faith, in love, in patience. Temperate, here means, what it so often means in our English idiom, "temperate in the use of wine." The old man who is a victim to the drink habit has destroyed, at the very outset, any possibility of dignity and influence in the home. **Grave** does not mean gloomy, but it does mean the absence of any such lightness or frivolity as would be incompatible with advancing years. **Sober-minded ;** here the keynote is struck. The word indicates soundness or sanity of mind, displaying itself externally in discreet and prudent conduct; internally in self-control—a control that is not merely exercised over our lower more sensual impulses, but over our emotional nature as well. We are learning to-day from our teachers of psychology that instincts, emotion, and reason are all constituent elements in our religious consciousness. The "sober-minded" man is he in whom all these component factors are controlled by his higher self, which is itself responsive to the control of God's Holy Spirit. The "sober-minded" person is the man who is master of himself.

Sound in faith, in love, in patience. Here, again, the note of soundness, or healthiness, is struck. There must be no internal weakness. The faith which inspires the man, the love he displays, the endurance with which he will face persecution, must be in healthy condition. "It must be prepared to stand a strain without snapping." It is to be noted that in these words "patience," or "endurance," takes its place instead of "hope"

along with "faith" and "love." Not that St. Paul has forgotten the place of hope in the Christian life. He has dwelt on it in the opening words of the Epistle, and he will return to it again, in the present chapter. But the substitution of patience here indicates that Christianity had entered on the path of persecution, and that the aged man might be called on to exhibit fortitude in suffering for his faith. **Titus ii. 1–6.**

That aged women likewise be reverent in demeanour, not slanderers, nor enslaved to much wine, teachers of that which is good. The fact that the elder women too are warned against over indulgence in wine would lead us to suppose, as indeed appears to have been the case, that a characteristic fault of the Cretans was drunkenness. St. Paul is not warning them merely against sins in general, but against those to which he knew them to be particularly prone. The most interesting word in the passage is **reverent**. It means "fit for sacred duties." The suggestion of it is, that aged women should carry into daily life the demeanour of priestesses in a temple. The proper ordering of the home life is to be viewed by them as a holy service, requiring for its due performance a solemn and reverent demeanour. Aged women.

That they may train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sober-minded, chaste, workers at home, kind, being in subjection to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. The young women.

The ideal that is here sketched for younger

Titus ii. 1–6.

married women is attractive and full of charm, though to some it may be archaic and unduly Oriental, with too little sense of proper emancipation. All would agree about the obligation to **love their husbands** and **their children.** That they should be **sober-minded** too is but to say that they, like all the others, should practise the virtues of self-discipline and self-control.

They are exhorted also to be **chaste ;** in noting this we recall that St. Paul too required most straitly corresponding purity in the man. **Workers at home** might seem, in some ears, to have an old-fashioned ring, but it is, none the less, a matter of permanent Christian obligation. We can hold firmly that a woman's proper place is in the home, if she has one, without any deficiency in gratitude for the magnificent public service, rendered in many departments, by women now. But it may also be said, and said with emphasis, that the woman who plunges into political or social work, leaving a neglected and demoralised home, is a deplorable spectacle for which Christianity has neither responsibility nor excuse. Mrs. Jellyby, in *Bleak House*, may be a caricature ; but she represents a possibility that Christian mothers should take heed to avoid. It is, perhaps, a profound acquaintance with human nature that inspires the Apostle to exhort the good housewife to be **kind.** Is not the capable mother of a family just the one who is apt to become a little severe and exacting with husband, children, and servants ? It may be said that she has the defects of her qualities. But it is a notable triumph

of Christian character when the capable and very efficient mistress of a household can be uniformly kind. **Being in subjection to their own husbands** are the words that may win least acceptance from the modern reader. St. Paul had given the same injunction in Col. iii. 18, and reference may be made to the comments on that passage on pp. 158–161. Titus ii. 1–6.

That the word of God be not blasphemed. Here emerges one of the strands that run through the whole Epistle, the vindication of the gospel, in the face of a censorious world, by the character and conduct of believers. The tree was, not unnaturally, judged by its fruits. Demeanour, such as St. Paul has sketched, on the part of the various members of Christian households, was the one thing that could effectively dissipate the attacks of hostile criticism.

The younger men likewise exhort to be sober-minded. For the younger men this one counsel is all inclusive; it carries with it, by implication, the other virtues of Christian manhood. That he is a believer is assumed; if then, as such, he has learnt the secret of self-mastery, self-discipline, and self-control, he is an effective member of the Church, a trustworthy soldier in the army of Christ. The younger men.

VII

TITUS HIMSELF TO BE AN EXAMPLE

In all things shewing thyself an ensample of good works; in thy doctrine *shewing* uncorruptness, gravity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of us.—TITUS II. 7–8.

Titus ii. 7–8.
Titus to be an example.

THE exhortation now passes for a moment to Titus himself. St. Paul has been sketching the outlines of the teaching he must give in Crete, and the warning is here interposed that all this instruction must be backed by his own character and conduct. He must himself set the **ensample of good works.** The warning is not superfluous. Is it not a fact of common observation that the teacher or preacher who can in eloquent words proclaim a lofty standard of living, is often in his own life a conspicuous example not merely of failure to reach it (that might well be pardonable), but of failure to try to reach it. The yielding to some besetting fault of temper or demeanour, with no apparent effort to overcome it, is often the thing that hinders most effectively the message he sets out to give to his fellows.

Titus himself to be an Example

In thy doctrine showing uncorruptness. In contrast with the unsound character of the erroneous teaching which St. Paul has been describing, and the unworthy methods and motives of its teachers, the teaching of Titus must be pure, free from any taint of mercenary motive, free from any harmful content. It must be characterised by **gravity,** a dignity of manner that is worthy of the dignity of the subject; it must be expressed in **sound speech,** that is, it must be morally healthy and stimulating; speech, too, **that cannot be condemned;** it must be so well thought out and carefully chosen that it presents an invulnerable front to hostile criticism, **that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of us.** It is an exacting responsibility that is here laid on Titus, for "he of the contrary part" was opposed to him from more sides than one. There were enemies and critics in the outer pagan world; there were hardly less formidable opponents working within the Church as professed Christians, purveyors of alien and foolish tenets which struck at the very roots of gospel truth. Both the manner and the matter of the teaching given by Titus must be such that all the enemies of the faith should recoil before it defeated and disarmed. **Titus ii. 7–8.**

VIII

SPECIAL COUNSELS TO SLAVES

Exhort servants to be in subjection to their own masters, *and* to be well-pleasing *to them* in all things; not gainsaying; not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.—Titus ii. 9–10.

Titus ii. 9–10.

The duty of servants.

It is a noteworthy thing that when apostolic injunctions are given for the conduct of family life, slaves are always included. We have already, in connection with Col. iii. 11 and iii. 22–25, spoken of the relation of Christianity to slavery in the ancient world, so that what is said here may be regarded as supplementary to the exposition of those passages.

It should be recalled that in the ancient world slaves were very numerous. For this reason, as well as on the ground of its peculiar appeal to the oppressed and suffering, Christianity at the beginning won its way in the ranks of slaves, especially those of better character, and made many converts. It gave them something to live for and something to hope for. It is difficult for us, in present-day circumstances, to realise how degrading and depressing the lot of a slave was. He had to work,

but he knew nothing of what we mean by the dignity of labour. Work was regarded as unworthy of a free man. Hence it, and all the degradation associated with it, were heaped on the shoulders of the slave. His lot, too, was depressing, for he had no rights. He was his owner's absolute property. This state of things was bad both for owner and for slave. It tended to make the former a brutal tyrant, liable to wreak in despotic fashion on the helpless slaves any whim that might occur to a sensual or cruel mind. It tended to make the slave obsequious and deceitful, incapable of higher life, chiefly devoted to avoiding his master's displeasure by pandering to his appetites, or to pursuing his own pleasure in depraved and vicious ways. There may have been, and doubtless were, many exceptions to this worse state of things. But it is in the main a true picture of things as they actually were, and were, in the circumstances, bound to be. The very springs of home life were poisoned. Nothing could be more demoralising for children than to be bought up in the midst of those who had no rights, and who probably helped to spoil them and pander to their worst instincts. We have to remember also that the evils of slavery, which arose from the institution itself, were greatly intensified by Roman legislation and by the conditions of Roman society in the first century A.D.

Titus ii. 9–10.

It was because slaves were so numerous that cruel laws were enacted and cruel customs practised. If a master happened to be killed by a slave, all the slaves in the household were put to death. If a

Titus ii. 9–10.

master were accused of a crime, he could surrender his slaves to be tortured to prove his innocence.

These were public enactments. Of the cruelty and wanton torture that were practised in private households, we can only form conjectures from some of the isolated instances known.

It would seem, then, from a survey of these facts that in some instances Christianity would be welcomed by slaves, as bringing new life and new hope; but also, that the ordinary slave, in starting on the Christian course, began with a very heavy handicap. The general circumstances of his life tended not only to degrade him, but to make him acquiesce in his degradation. It needed a power that was Divine to make the slave honest, true, and pure.

The injunctions given here harmonise with what St. Paul has said elsewhere, and with the counsels of St. Peter. There is to be no disposition to revolt, either from a heathen or from a Christian master; there must be a sincere and honest attempt to please them by rendering faithful service; there must be no insubordination and no dishonesty; on the other hand, there must be whole-hearted loyalty. And the object of all this excellent conduct must be **that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.**

To adorn the doctrine.

The expression "to adorn the doctrine" has now become a very familiar one to us; and, perhaps for that reason, it calls for a little thought. The general question may arise: "How can anything that is good and fair in itself be adorned? It

seems to be superfluous and unnecessary." To which it may be replied that it is what is good to begin with that is suitable for adornment and capable of it. What is itself vile or mean cannot be helped by further adornment. But if, apart from any abstract question like this, we consider the particular words before us, it is perfectly clear in what sense even the doctrine of God can be adorned. **Titus ii. 9–10.**

Even so fair a thing as Divine truth can be adorned when it is carried into practice and realised in action. A lofty injunction has more convincing force when it is seen to be influencing life and modifying conduct. There may be cases of political or philosophic teaching in which it would not be quite fair to appraise the worth of a particular system by the conduct of its professed upholders. But in the case of a religion that claims profoundly to affect the moral character of its votaries, it is fair to apply the test of conduct. And those who respond to the test may be regarded as "adorning" the religion they profess. They have shown that the gospel is a real thing and have displayed in their lives its curative powers. As Dr. Maclaren says: "The doctrines of Christianity, when they are only in words, are less fair than the same truths when they are embodied in a life."

It might be thought that when the injunction is "to adorn the doctrine" only a rare and lofty few could be expected to respond, and that those who did respond must move in regions far above the common road of daily life. But this is not so. It

Titus ii. 9–10.

is to slaves, with all the degradation that characterised their lot, that the command was given. And how were they to carry it out? Simply by the exercise of the homely virtues that St. Paul has just enumerated. To be a thoroughly honest and satisfactory slave was to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour."

It is a mistake to think that great spheres are necessary for the operation of great principles. On the contrary, the smallest and most commonplace sphere can exhibit all the grace and beauty of the gospel, and in so doing can adorn it. The truth is expressed in the often-quoted lines:

> A servant, with this clause,
> Makes drudgery divine;
> Who sweeps a house as by Thy laws
> Makes that and the action fine.

Even if there be matters in this Epistle that concern more particularly the island of Crete in the first century A.D., this thought is one of interest for all the world and for all time; the thought that it is at once the lofty privilege and the grave responsibility of the Christian to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour," and to do it in carrying out the most commonplace duties of most ordinary life. And it must not be forgotten that the converse is also true. If we can adorn by a consistent life, we can also discredit and hinder the gospel by an inconsistent one. We can cause the word of God to be ill spoken of, "blasphemed." What St. Paul feared in Crete is often to be seen happening in the

foreign missionary field to-day. There is no greater obstacle to the work of the English missionary in Eastern lands than the conduct of English sailors, traders, and officials, who are naturally assumed to hold the faith which their fellow-countrymen have brought. **Titus ii. 9–10.**

But it is not only in the foreign missionary field that glaring inconsistency does harm. In the home, in the place of business, in the varied relations of social life, a profession of Christianity which seems to involve no *difference* at all from the non-Christian world, which, so far as demeanour and conduct are concerned, simply might not be there, is the thing that affords material for the cynic and the scoffer and brings the faith into discredit.

If St. Paul were asked *how* this lofty ideal can be realised, there is no doubt what his answer would be. It can only be done by closest association with Christ. We must be "in Him." We can only adorn His doctrine, if He first adorns us. His life must be seen shining in and through ours. Just as the face of Moses was said to be radiant with Divine glory after his communion with God, so the observers of our words and deeds must "take knowledge" that we have "been with Jesus." This is, in effect, the answer he gives in the words that now follow.

IX

THE DIVINE GRACE THAT MAKES OBEDIENCE POSSIBLE

For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world; looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works.

These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no man despise thee.—TITUS II. 11–15.

Titus ii. 11–15.
Faith and conduct.

WE have already, in the exposition of *Colossians*, had occasion to remark that for St. Paul, theory and practice, religion and conduct, are most inseparably connected. Faith must express itself in corresponding action; and, conversely, right action is only possible as the outcome of an inspiring faith.

In the connection between the present passage and the words that have immediately preceded it, we have the same thought set forth. St. Paul has been describing the behaviour by which, in all the relations of everyday life, various classes of Christians must "adorn the doctrine of God." He feels that he cannot leave the matter here. He must tell them where the power is to be found to enable

them to do what he bids them. And he tells them that the power is to be found in the incarnate Christ. God so loved the world that He sent His Son, and the Son Who came to earth in obedience to His Father's will can enable them also to do what the Father requires of His children. In Him **the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men.** **Titus ii. 11–15.**

The English reader should be careful to observe here that the R.V. rendering is different from the A.V., and is a more accurate rendering of the Greek. The A.V. translators render it: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men." The R.V. rendering is: "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men." The difference is that the A.V. translators make the Apostle say that the grace of God has appeared to all men; a statement that did not represent the facts in his day, nor has it yet done so. What he did say was that the grace of God appeared (when Christ came in the flesh), and that the grace which was then manifested holds the promise of, is capable of, bringing salvation to the whole of humanity.

It is characteristic of St. Paul to link up this stupendous Divine truth with the daily needs of the humble Christians of Crete; to say to them, in effect: "It was to enable you to undertake the tasks and bear the burdens of your daily life, that God's own Son came into the world. All the resources of divinity and eternity were employed, and are at your disposal for your aid and comfort."

Titus ii. 11–15.

The Incarnation was the appearing of the grace of God. We have already, in the study of Col. i. 2, tried to explain the meaning that "grace" had for St. Paul. We may add here some helpful words of Dr. Maclaren: "Grace is a self-motived, ever-acting, communicating, and stooping love which brings in its hands the gift of forgiveness, and deals with those on whom it lavishes this tenderness, not according to their merits, but according to the pulsations of its own heart. And thus grace is the shorthand word for the self-motived, ever-acting, communicating, stooping and pardoning mercy which has its very home and throne in the heart of God Himself." This was something of the meaning of the revelation of the Father's grace which the Son brought when He came to us, when "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

The word **appeared** has an interesting history, both in its Biblical and its general usage. In its application to persons it is employed especially of Divine interposition, particularly when help is being brought; and the fact that the adjective that means "bringing salvation" is joined to it, shows that that is the general reference here. The Person and the work of Our Lord, all His character and all His acts, were the historic manifestation of God's free grace, with its message of salvation for all mankind.

It should not be forgotten that St. Paul's words here imply that the Christ in Whom God's grace was so manifested could only manifest it because of His unique and special relation to God. His coming

to earth was not simply the birth of a man; it was the incarnation of God. **Titus ii. 11–15.**

The words **bringing salvation** represent one adjective in the Greek, and it should be remarked that it indicates an aim and a possibility rather than an actually realised fact. God's grace, in Christ, is freely offered to all, and is capable of saving all. But its efficacy depends on its acceptance. It can be received with glad and humble faith; it can also be rejected. A prescribed medicine can only be of service to the patient who takes it. The gift is universal and its power is absolute; but they are only available and effective for the heart that is open to receive them.

And this is only another way of saying that the salvation is for all; because the one condition for its efficacy is one that all can fulfil. They are only asked to receive, believe, and trust. That is a response which all can make. If the conditions for its appropriation had been intellectual, it might have affected only an exalted few. But to insist that it needs only to be accepted with faith, is to say that the gift is universal and open to all.

The manifestation of God's saving grace that has been made in Christ comes to us, **instructing us.** This word of our Revisers better represents the Greek than the A.V. word "teaching." The Greek word includes the idea of "teaching" but it adds the further notion of "training," and "discipline." As Dr. Moffatt translates it, it "schools" us. In some of the New Testament passages where the word occurs the latter idea is predominant, and it is

Titus ii. 11–15.

translated "chastening." The word indicates the educative power of God's grace; it not only teaches us the right way, but it guides our steps, with discipline, if that should be necessary, into it and along it. It is a way that leads along the paths of this life, but it does not end with them. It passes into the hereafter, and the training that we receive in the school of God's grace has to do both with the present and the future.

So far as this life is concerned it is **to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world.** It is to be observed that St. Paul here puts the negative before the positive. The object of our training in Christ is to exclude some things as well as to include others; to eradicate as well as to cultivate; to destroy as well as to develop. Why should the negative come first? Why are we told of the evils that must disappear before we hear of the virtues that are to take their place? Because they are there first; they are already in possession. But they must go. It is true that they can only be made to go by the coming in of what is better to take their place; but the bad must be turned out to make room for the better. We hear, sometimes nowadays of the wish for and the duty of self-realisation. This is quite well, within limits. We have not only to take into consideration the self-realisation of others, but, with regard to our own, we have to ask what kind of a self it is we wish to realise. If it is a self still wedded to "ungodliness and worldly lusts" its

realisation may be a disastrous thing. On the other hand, the realisation of a self that is living "soberly and righteously and godly" may be in every way beneficent. **Titus ii. 11–15.**

The things that must disappear are **ungodliness.** A general outlook on life that depends on wholly wrong thoughts about God is bound to issue in perverted and ultimately in wicked deeds. **Worldly lusts** too must go. The expression does not refer simply to sensual desires, but to all desires, plans, and ambitions, however intellectual and refined, that limit themselves to this fleeting world. Anything that finds its goal in this world, and deliberately aims at it, to the total exclusion of all that is spiritual and eternal, is a worldly lust. The word that is translated "worldly" began by meaning simply the universe as an ordered whole, but it came to be used by Christian writers to express the world as apart from or opposed to God—worldly, in the sense of unspiritual and irreligious. But the instruction has its positive side, and that is expressed in the words, **we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world.** They cover in a comprehensive fashion duty to one's self, to one's neighbour, and to God. By **soberly** is indicated that self-control of which mention has been so often made in the Epistle; the self-control which enables a man to keep in hand, while giving due and proper expression to them, all his desires, inclinations, and faculties. It means self-discipline and self-mastery. By **righteously** is indicated not merely respect for the legal rights of others, but the spirit of kindliness

Titus ii. 11–15.

and consideration, even of merciful gentleness shown by one who views his fellow-men as brothers. And by **godly** is indicated the spirit of the man who believes in God and regards the relation with Him as fundamental; who knows that it is from God that the power comes to live soberly and righteously; to whom God is not a part of his life, but in a very real sense the whole of it.

All this has to do with this present age with all its necessary activities. But the Christian's gaze is fixed above and beyond it. The present is but preliminary and preparatory. The future holds something in store, of which he is always expectant.

"The blessed hope."

Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. The word **hope** here is used in an objective sense, meaning "the thing hoped for." It is identical with the **appearing.** The hoped-for thing for which the Christian should be ever looking is the **appearing.** The word "appearing" is the noun corresponding to the verb "appeared" in verse 11. It was specially used in contemporary Greek of the accession of a Roman Emperor, and the thought may have been in St. Paul's mind that when Christ should appear in glory, it would be the true King entering into His eternal kingdom. The collocation of the verb and its corresponding noun connects, in the Christian's thought, the First Coming of Christ with the Second. He who has experienced the redeeming love of the Saviour, Who was born at Bethlehem and died on Calvary, will look for the promised manifestation when the fruition of the

redeeming work will be fully seen. The appearance of the grace leads on our thoughts and hopes to the future appearance of the glory. Titus ii. 11–15.

There is a comparison and a contrast. The manifestations are alike in the fact that each is a manifestation of God in Jesus Christ. They differ in that the first meant humiliation. It was a manifestation of the Divine love stooping to save. The second means **glory.** The word comes to us with Old Testament associations, meaning, in the first instance, the visible light that shone between the Cherubim in the Holy of Holies, and then, more generally, the totality of the Divine Majesty so far as it is revealed to men. It suggests to us the transcendent and ineffable splendour, the overwhelming greatness of the Coming for which we look.

And He, for Whom we look with expectancy, is **our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.** The rendering of the Greek that lies behind these words is not an easy matter, and has given rise to differences of opinion on the part of competent scholars. The above words are the version adopted by our English Revisers. It will be observed that it makes the words refer to one Person, Jesus Christ, Who is described as being "our great God and Saviour." Dr. Weymouth follows this. The translation of the A.V. draws a clear distinction between the two persons: "the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Dr. Moffatt adopts this rendering. Here, it will be observed, the words "great God" are reserved for the Father, the First

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Person in the Trinity, while Jesus Christ is spoken of as "Saviour." Also, in the A.V., the words "of the glory" are simply regarded as an adjective, qualifying "the appearing," and are made to read as "glorious appearing." For this there does not appear to be any linguistic justification at all. Again, as we read the Greek, the word "Saviour" certainly seems to be connected with the "great God" and not with "Jesus Christ." For these reasons it would seem that the A.V. rendering cannot stand.

Can we then, without further question, accept the rendering of the R.V.? Dr. Hort has pointed out certain difficulties in the way of this. He thinks that the adjective "great" prefixed to God seems to suggest such an individualising of the word as to make it indicate a separate Deity, "the Deity of Tritheism, not the equally perfect Deity of a Person of one Godhead." He thinks this is very unlike the general usage of the New Testament. He thinks, also, that to speak of Christ's Second Coming as His "glory" is unlike other New Testament language. He prefers to take the word "Jesus Christ" as standing in apposition to "the glory." What Christians should be expecting is "the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour" and that glory is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the "glory" of the Supreme God, Who has wrought for us salvation through Him.

So the words have been rendered in three ways, the A.V., the R.V., and the way supported by Dr. Hort. The A.V. would seem to be excluded as

not accurately translating the Greek. The choice between the two latter ones is more difficult. It may be urged in support of the R.V. that it does justice to the Greek. It may be pointed out that to "redeem" is a function of Jehovah in the Old Testament; and that as it is here predicated of Christ, it amounts to an identification of Him with God. There is also the possibility that a contrast is intended between Christ and the reigning emperor; possibly, too, with the deities of the contemporary Mystery religions. The title, "God and Saviour," had already been applied to Eastern potentates. In the West we have the evidence of inscriptions that it had been applied to Julius Cæsar. In the cult of Isis, Osiris was called "Lord and Saviour." May not St. Paul have wished to convey the truth that these exalted titles could only rightly be applied to Christ, that what was erroneously predicated of emperors or "mystery" divinities could truly be said of Him?

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The difficulty that stands in the way of this is the usage in St. Paul's other extant epistles. It is not easy to find an absolutely clear indisputable case in which the Apostle, in an unmodified way, applies the term "God" to Our Lord. There are passages in which it *may* be the case, taking the words as they stand, such as Rom. ix. 5. There are also passages in which the question of a variant reading is involved. If a quite unmistakable instance could be found, the decision here would be rendered more easy.

In considering Dr. Hort's view, it is a question

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how far it had become customary to speak of Christ as " the glory " of God. Such passages as II Cor. iv. 4 and Eph. i. 3 compared with i. 17 might seem to point in that direction. We recall, too, as generally illustrative, that in Col. ii. 2 Christ was spoken of as " the mystery of God." Such forms of speech were not impossible. The question is whether it is not just a little too subtle, a little over-ingenious, and so possibly a little non-natural. We recall in this connection Hooker's famous dictum, that " where a literal construction will stand, the farthest from the letter is commonly the worst." By the application of this test the Revisers' rendering, which is the strictly grammatical one, would seem to be maintained. Not that the translation of Dr. Hort does any violence to the grammar. It does not ; but it rather lies below the surface than on the surface. If the passage were a piece of ordinary Greek, and no important point of theology were involved, the rendering of the Revisers would seem to be the more obvious one. In dealing with these points of criticism we have always to remember that the object is to find out exactly what St. Paul *did* say—however much it may conflict with our preconceived views—and not to try to make him say what we should *like* him to say.

We may summarise this rather prolonged discussion by saying that the A.V. makes the words refer to *two :* " the great God " and " our Saviour Jesus Christ." The R.V. and Dr. Hort make the words refer to *one*, that is Jesus Christ. By the R.V. He is called " our great God and Saviour."

By Dr. Hort He is called " the glory " of our great God and Saviour. Titus ii. 11–15.

Whichever of the three renderings be adopted, no profound doctrinal issue is raised; there is no question of doing less than justice to the Divinity of Our Lord. Even on the A.V. rendering the same appearing is the appearing of both, and there is the assignment to both of one and the same glory. The words remind us of Christ's own words: " The Son of Man . . . when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." [1] Dr. Hort's rendering assigns to Christ the unique and supreme position of " the glory " of the Father, while in the R.V. rendering the words are a most absolute and categorical declaration of His Godhead. Till further light is thrown on this passage, and more convincing evidence in either direction is forthcoming, the student of the English Bible will be well advised to follow the Revisers.

The pursuit of this discussion must not make us forget that the hope is a **blessed** one. This adjective is generally used in connection with persons, and we may recall that what we hope for is the coming of a person—our Saviour. It is *His* personal coming that will put the crown of true happiness, of perfect bliss, on life. It has been said that the attitude towards this expected coming is a real test of genuine Christianity. If the thought of the Coming inspires one with dismay, or even something like positive terror, can it be said that the Christian's heart is right with his Saviour? Does it not point

[1] St. Mark viii. 38.

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to some incongruity of life, some cherished sin or weakness, the persistence in which causes one to shrink from the very thought of the immediate personal presence of the Master? And if we could enter into St. Paul's yearning desire to see and welcome his Lord, if the hope could be for us a "blessed" one, would it not mean an uplift and a stimulus so that we, too, even while looking and waiting, should ourselves be "blessed"?

The Christ for Whose appearing we are looking is the Christ Who has already appeared, in Whom "the grace of God hath appeared." This "grace" disciplined us, to live as God-fearing men in this world and to look for the coming of Our Lord. The following words reiterate this truth, but they do so in a different form. They tell us how Christ wrought this work for us and in us.

Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works. It may, again, be helpful here to examine the force of particular expressions before we try to gather up the gist of the passage as a whole.

Who gave Himself for us. We recall here St. Paul's words in I Tim. ii. 6, "Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself a ransom for all"; and in Gal. i. 4, "our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for our sins"; and we feel absolutely certain that his words depend on those of Our Lord Himself in St. Mark x. 45: "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ranson for many." The concluding words of this saying

carry us on to the next words in our Epistle: **That He might redeem us from all iniquity.** The word "redeem" recalls the word "redemption" in Col. i. 14. We there saw that even if "rescue" or "deliver" might stand as an adequate rendering of the word, the idea of "ransom" is not wholly absent, and is often implied in the context. Here, the immediately preceding words, "Who gave Himself for us," suggest the cost at which our redemption was effected. Titus ii. 11–15.

It is from "iniquity" as from an alien power that we are delivered, just as God, of old, had delivered His people from captivity in Egypt and in Babylon. It is God's purpose, further, to **purify unto Himself a people for His own possession.** The idea of purifying here seems to be a reminiscence of the words of Ezek. xxxvii. 23: "I will save them out of all their dwelling places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them; so shall they be my people, and I will be their God," where cleansing, as here, follows on ransom. Possibly the thought in the prophet's mind was that of cleansing by sprinkling with the blood of the covenant victim, so that the words have appropriate suggestion of Him "in Whom we have our redemption through His blood."

"A people for His own possession" is a phrase that again takes us back to the Greek Old Testament. It seems to originate there, and to have been coined in an attempt adequately to represent the Hebrew that was being translated. The original significance was "that which is over and above," indicating, "His own possession."

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apparently, either "the special portion which a conqueror took for himself before the spoil was divided, or the firstfruits which the owner took from his threshing floor" (Lock). What it came to mean was a possession which belongs particularly and exclusively to any one person. As applied to Israel it meant that they were God's own peculiar people. As employed here it suggests that those who have been redeemed by Christ are His own particular people, with the further thought that He too is King, the triumphant King Who has rescued them from the slavery in which they were held.

The reference to Israel may still continue in the phrase, **zealous of good works.** It had been the privilege and the obligation of Israel just because they were a "people for His own possession" to keep God's law and exhibit His righteousness to the world. On the Christian, too, as redeemed and cleansed, lies the obligation to pursue with eager enthusiasm and exhibit in life the "good works," "which God afore prepared that we should walk in them."

It remains now, briefly, to appropriate for ourselves the teaching that St. Paul gives in these words. They might almost be said to summarise his teaching as a whole. They illustrate his constant insistence on the inseparable connection between doctrine and conduct. If the earlier context be taken into account, we have reference to what has happened, to what is now to be done, and to what is to be hoped for in the future, and so arrive at the

three great Christian virtues of faith, charity, and hope. Christ came in humility to redeem us; He will come in glory to claim for His own those whom He has redeemed. Between these two events lies, for us, life animated by a hope. Titus ii. 11–15.

When we say "He gave Himself for us" our thoughts go back to those other great words: "God is love," and "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." For it is the essence of love to give itself in uttermost self-sacrifice for those who are loved. Human analogies can take us some way in understanding this, but only some way. There is something unique and ineffable about the love of Christ, "Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient *even* unto death, yea, the death of the Cross."

The love of Christ, and the redemption that it inspired Him to accomplish for us, can only be understood by those who feel they need it; who know that they are in bondage to "iniquity." Christ said: "He that doeth sin is the slave of sin," and it was from that slavery that His redeeming was necessary to set us free. Dr. Maclaren's words here are absolutely true: "The root cause of almost all the inadequate conceptions of Christ and His work which depart from the plain teaching of Christ and Scripture lie here, that men do not recognise the fact of their bondage to sin. Wherever

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that recognition is weak, you will have a maimed Christ and an impotent Christ." It is the man who knows a sense of guilt, and something of the torture of an accusing conscience, who also knows the dominating tyranny of a vicious habit, who will cling thankfully and hopefully to the words, "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity."

The words "for us" mean "on our behalf." They do not assert, but, on the other hand, they do not contradict, the view—undoubtedly St. Paul's—that Christ gave Himself in our stead; the so-called "substitutionary" view of the Atonement. It is admitted, even by those who discard it, that it *was* St. Paul's view. And it seems to be the most natural interpretation of Our Lord's words: "The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many." It is not without significance that, in some instances, the repudiation of this Pauline view is accompanied by the argument that the words of Christ in St. Mark x. 45 are not genuine, but represent a later insertion. After all, there are human analogies here too. Men have often given up their own lives in order that others might live. They have procured their lives by dying instead of them. These analogies may not go the whole way, but they do point onward to the Cross.

We have already discussed the origin and associations of the phrase, "a people for His own possession." The further thought that presents itself is that Christ wins us "for His own possession" because He gave Himself for us. In such a trans-

action it is only a heart that can win a heart; the only price that can be paid for a heart is the heart that gives itself in return. Christ gave Himself for us that we might give ourselves to Him. **Titus ii. 11–15.**

The words "zealous of good works" harmonise with the emphasis that is laid on conduct throughout this Epistle. It was not unnatural that as St. Paul grew older and knew that in his earlier writings he had laid the firm foundation of Christian doctrine; knew, too, the paramount *need* of a consistent daily Christian life, in such a place as Crete—should dwell constantly on "good works." We have seen in our reading of the Epistle, especially the latter part of this chapter, that he has not forgotten to emphasise positive teaching, the "faith" on which our "works" must rest. He is not oblivious of the root from which the fruit must grow. Here, however, he dwells with emphasis on the need for fruit.

After all, a true Christian can hardly be other than a zealous one. It is true that zeal has its dangers; the zealot may degenerate into the fanatic or the so-called "party man." This may happen when the element of "sober-mindedness" or self-control is lacking. And yet the cause of human progress would have been badly served if the world had had no zealots. The calm judicious neutral may steady it, but he does not do much to help it on. There are, it must be admitted, those who are calm and judicious, but not neutral. They are on the side of Christ, but glowing zeal is not their *metier*. Bishop Butler, with his sober standard of feeling in matters of religion, did great service to English

Titus ii. 11–15.

thought and to Christianity by the writing of his *Analogy;* but he could neither understand nor sympathise with the ardent zeal of Wesley's evangelising work. The "sober standard of feeling in matters of religion" [1] is a phrase beneath which much conventional Laodicean Christianity takes shelter, and so far as this is the case, it should be dislodged from its shelter and stirred to vigorous life. The Christianity which is innocent of any desire to Christianise the world by strenuous effort is a Christianity that culpably fails in zeal for good works.

It is the object of the zeal that characterises it and makes it worthy or unworthy. The zeal of the so-called "spike" devoted to red tape and minutiæ of ceremonial, keen to emphasise external detail, is an unattractive thing. So, too, is the zeal of the bitter and narrow party man.

To be really "zealous of good works" is to be eagerly desirous to be Christlike; to be yearning and to be striving to be more and more like Him; to be showing forth His grace and love in all the relations of daily life; to be helping others, by being like Him ourselves.

This faith in a redeeming and purifying Christ, this hope of His coming, all issuing in a Christian life that is at once sober-minded and zealous of good works, form a theme on which Titus is never to be silent. His speech must be constantly of them. His exhortations must be constantly concerned with them. So far as his insistence on the theme

[1] The phrase comes in the *Preface* to Keble's *Christian Year*.

provokes opposition and criticism, he must meet them with reproof; not mild, shrinking, and apologetic, but reproof decided and authoritative. He must present a very firm front to all opponents. Otherwise they may despise him and go on to despise the cause for which he stands. There is such a thing as true self-confidence; not based ultimately on self, but on the presence and power of God's Holy Spirit within. Secure in this, Titus must present to the world such a demeanour as will dispel effectually any attitude of scorn or of contempt.

Titus ii. 11–15.

X

CHRISTIANS AND THE CIVIL POWER

Put them in mind to be in subjection to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready unto every good work, to speak evil of no man, not to be contentious, to be gentle, showing all meekness toward all men. For we also were aforetime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.—TITUS III. 1–3.

Titus iii. 1–3.

IN these words St. Paul describes the instruction that Titus must give to his flock about their relations with the external world. His injunctions fall into two clearly marked divisions, dealing respectively with political and social life. Under the first head he indicates the attitude Christians should take to the civil authority; under the second, the behaviour they should display to individuals belonging to the non-Christian world.

Christians and the civil power.

It was not unnecessary that St. Paul should speak out quite clearly on the subject of obedience to the civil power. The earliest generations of Christians might not unnaturally regard their allegiance to Christ as exempting them from the sway of any earthly authority. Especially when there was an eager expectation of the immediate

return of the Lord, Christians might regard themselves as rightly detached from any obligation to participate in the affairs of the present world. In addition to these general considerations, there were others of a more particular and local character that had to do with Crete. The Cretans themselves had the reputation of being a very turbulent people. There was also on the island a considerable Jewish population, representing a people who were always easily moved to rebellion against the reigning power. **Titus iii. 1–3.**

In writing to the Romans, and in writing to Timothy, St. Paul had declared his mind, in passages which are now regarded as classical, on this point.[1] In those places, as in the passage before us, he inculcates a spirit of loyalty and of practical obedience to the ruling powers. What is to be the attitude of the Christian, if the civil authorities should decree a course of action that is clearly incompatible with Christian principles, he does not specifically say. But it is a fair inference, from his general principles, that he would wish his converts to put their Christianity first, and, in the interests of conscience, to refuse obedience to the authorities on the particular point; then, submissively, to take the consequences, suffering for Christ's sake. He would not have countenanced any attitude of revolt, any rebellious attempt to overthrow the existing civil constitution.

We have to interpret his view in relation to the particular circumstances in which he wrote. He

[1] Rom. xiii. 1-7; I Tim. ii. 1, 2.

Titus iii. 1–3.

had to think of the infant Church in relation with the Roman Empire of his day. It is a misapplication of his words if they are either invoked or repudiated in connection with such conflicts as those between Roundheads and Royalists in the past, or between monarchists and republicans in our own day. It will be remembered that St. Peter's advice was to the same general effect as St. Paul's.

The words **put them in mind** indicate that St. Paul had expressed his mind on this topic when he was present in Crete. They also imply that there were no new duties to be enforced; the injunction was simply to carry into action what they had already learned. So far as there is a distinction to be drawn between being **in subjection** to rulers and being **obedient,** the former seems to indicate the general attitude that should be maintained, while the latter implies obedience to particular commands.

To be ready unto every good work may have as wide a reference as the words imply, while at the same time indicating the obligation of Christians to take an active share in every good project, civil and municipal, that the Government might inaugurate. So far as anything of this kind went, they were to make it clear, beyond all possibility of doubt, that they were good citizens prepared to co-operate actively for the welfare of the State.

The Christian and society.

In the words that follow he turns from the political to the social, and emphasises the need for courtesy and gentleness in private life. **To speak evil of no man, not to be contentious, to be gentle,**

showing all meekness toward all men. These words convey their meaning clearly in the English as in the Greek, and call for no comment, except to point out that the latter clause suggests the difficult duty of returning good for evil. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" is really the gist of the counsels given here. Titus iii. 1–3.

Such a standard of conduct may rightly be required from the Cretans, for they too in former days had displayed the same faults and weaknesses as their pagan neighbours now displayed to them. **For we also were aforetime foolish, disobedient.** The word "foolish" here refers more particularly to the mind. "We were without any perception of divine things. We had no insight." "Disobedient" refers to action. Even in cases where we did perceive the Divine law, we were disobedient to it. **Deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy.** The life that is here depicted was a life utterly astray, a servile life, lived in bondage to every lower appetite; hence utterly selfish and consequently issuing in malice and envy.

Hateful, hating one another, forms the climax of the description. To be hateful one's self and to be actively hating every one else expresses the deepest depth of unsocial and unlovely life. It is because the Cretan Christians once were thus, and have only changed because, by an act of the Divine love, they have been rescued from these depths, they must be very "gentle" to those still untouched by that same Divine love.

Titus iii. 1–3. By the word "we" St. Paul includes himself generally with the Cretans, in speaking of the former unredeemed life. To do so, softens any sting the words might have, and affords in his very speech an example of that Christian courtesy he wishes them to practise.

XI

THE WASHING OF REGENERATION AND RENEWING OF THE SPIRIT

But when the kindness of God our Saviour, and his love toward man, appeared, not by works *done* in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Faithful is the saying, and concerning these things I will that thou affirm confidently, to the end that they which have believed God may be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.—Titus iii. 4–8.

We had an example, in chap. ii., of the characteristically Pauline habit of reinforcing an appeal for conduct by a reference to the faith on which any Christian appeal for conduct must rest. It is on the doctrinal ground that the practical appeal is made. Here is the other striking example which this Epistle affords of the same method. **Titus iii. 4–8.**

He has depicted the depths of sin in which the Cretans once were sunk. In asking them to be very gentle to those still in those same depths, he bids them remember the gracious act of God by which

Titus iii. 4–8.

they were themselves rescued from these depths. It is only because of what God has done for them, and in them, that he has any ground for expecting them to carry out his injunction.

The difference between this passage and the one in chap. ii. is, that in the former one he was speaking of the mutual duties of Christians to one another. The obligation for those duties was grounded on God's revelation of grace in Christ. In these words he is speaking of the relations of Christians with the external pagan world; and here too the appeal that he makes is grounded on what God has done in Christ. What He *has* done for them, He wills to do and can do for these others. It is because God has redeemed these Cretan Christians that they must behave, to the other Cretans, as to those whom He also wills to redeem.

But when the kindness of God our Saviour, and His love toward man, appeared. The expressive word "kindness," meaning comprehensively God's readiness to forgive and to bless, is peculiar to St. Paul's writings in the New Testament. The Greek word represented by the words "love toward man" is really our English word "philanthropy." In the New Testament it only comes here and in Acts xxviii. 2, where it indicates the kindness which the "barbarians" of Malta showed to the victims of the shipwreck. But it is a word constantly used in classical Greek and in the Greek of the Apocrypha. It means, as its form suggests, love of mankind as such, a love displaying itself appropriately in all the relations of life. The combination

of it with "kindness" is an attempt to express something of the gracious, loving, compassion of God towards a fallen and sinful world. The word "appeared" is the one that St. Paul has already used to express the manifestation of the grace of God in Christ. Titus iii. 4–8.

Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us. We seem to hear in these words an echo of the older controversies in which St. Paul was engaged with Pharisaic Judaism. He insisted then, and he never ceased to insist, upon the undeservedness of the Divine grace, upon the fact that we depend wholly upon the Divine love and compassion, and have neither claim nor merit that we can, in any spirit of independence, put forward from our own side. It was "according to His mercy" that He saved us.

Through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. The passage in St. Paul's other Epistles that most resembles these words is Eph. v. 26: "Having cleansed it [the Church] by the washing of water with the word." Possibly the words of both passages rest ultimately on the saying of Our Lord that was afterwards put on record in St. John iii. 5: "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." For the Divine sanction given to baptism and its significance in the evangelising work of the Church we recall too the later words: "Go ye, therefore, and make "The washing of regeneration."

Titus iii. 4–8.

disciples of all the nations, baptising them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

The Greek word translated **regeneration** is only used here in the New Testament of spiritual birth. It expresses the idea of "being born again." The Christian is one in whom a change of life so complete has been wrought that it is only adequately comparable to being born afresh, or, as St. Paul expresses it in Rom. vi., to rising again to a new life from the grave.

Dr. Lock points out that certain particular associations may have clustered round the word. The Rabbinic title for a convert to Judaism was "a new creature." In the Mystery religions of the Gentile world, part of the process of initiation was a bath, after taking which the initiate was held to be "reborn" into a new life. St. Paul may have wished to convey that the rebirth into a new life, spoken of in other faiths, was really achieved through the renewing power of the Divine Spirit associated with the rebirth that baptism typified.

"Renewing of the Holy Ghost."

The Greek word translated **renewing** only occurs again in Rom. xii. 2, and it is suggested that both it and its corresponding verb may have been coined by St. Paul to express the idea he wished to convey. So far as the Greek of the whole passage goes, it seems fairly certain that the two clauses, "the washing of regeneration" and "the renewing of the Holy Ghost," are closely linked as inseparable parts of one whole. They are both included under the one article "the." We have already, in speaking

of Col. ii. 12, spoken of St. Paul's general conception of baptism and need only say here that his words in this passage do connect the renewing of the Holy Ghost with the washing of regeneration, and that it probably never occurred to him to conceive the entry on the Christian life in any other way. To say this is not in any way to fetter or limit the gracious influence of God's good Spirit on man. It is to obey what is a generally recognised, because it seems to be a Divinely appointed, rule of action. **Titus iii. 4–8.**

Which He poured out upon us recalls the words of the Prophet Joel ii. 28, "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh," as applied and interpreted by St. Peter on the Day of Pentecost. **Richly** declares for us at once the lavishness and the sufficiency of the gift. It fully meets the needs of all, and it also meets *all* the needs of *each* of us. And it is all done **through Jesus Christ our Saviour.** His work is equated, as it were, with God's work. It is because of His redemptive work both that the Spirit can be given and that men can be enabled to receive it.

That, being justified by His grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The student of St. Paul's writings will remember that in the famous passage in Rom. v. we are said to be "justified by faith." There is no real contradiction involved with this passage. Grace is the instrument of God's bestowal, faith is the condition of man's reception. In the words before us St. Paul is emphasising so strongly God's loving action in Christ, in his appeal for Christian behaviour to

Titus iii. 4–8.

the outside world, that he says nothing about the condition. His whole thought is of the gift.

Just as in the *Romans* passage, the " being justified " refers to the outset of the Christian life. For the rest, it is animated and inspired by a hope. The repentant and forgiven sinner, " justified by faith," becomes an heir of life ; he already enters into partial possession, but he lives in the hope of richer and fuller possession of that life which, through the Spirit, he now enjoys.

Faithful is the saying. This familiar phrase, it is to be noted, is peculiar to the Pastoral Epistles, and it may be convenient to enumerate the five places in which it comes. They are, I Tim. i. 15, iii. 1, iv. 9 ; II Tim. ii. 11 ; Titus iii. 8. Because of this constant repetition, it seems likely that it will have something of the same meaning in every case. It has been suggested by Dr. Turner, in his recent Inaugural Lecture as Dean Ireland's Professor, that the words are the marginal gloss of some scribe, calling attention to the importance of the adjacent words, and that, in process of the transcription of the manuscripts, the gloss has become incorporated in the text. If the words belong to the text of the Epistle and are St. Paul's own, they may be taken either as calling attention to the importance of what he is saying, or as indicating that his words are a quotation from some well-known group or collection of sayings.

Dr. St. John Parry thinks that in every passage in connection with which the phrase occurs, there is a reference to " eternal life " as God's purpose for us

in Christ, and that in each case the writer inserts the clause: "The word [of God] can be trusted." On this hypothesis it should be noted that where the words come in I Tim. iii. 1 they refer, as the *margin* of our R.V. indicates that some prefer to make them do, to the paragraph at the end of the preceding chapter. Titus iii. 4–8.

And concerning these things I will that thou affirm confidently, to the end that they which have believed God may be careful to maintain good works. Titus is to insist continuously and emphatically upon the thought of all that God has done, in Christ, for man, in order to stir up the Cretan converts to a zealous care for the welfare of their pagan neighbours. They are to be **careful** to maintain good works. The Greek word for "careful" only occurs here in the New Testament, and means to "take thought," to "take pains" about anything; to put a thing in the front rank of importance in life, so that it takes precedence of all other aims and objects. What they are to be "careful" about is **to maintain good works.**

The problem about these words is whether they have a more concrete and particular meaning, or whether they are used in a wider, more metaphorical way. On the former supposition, the particular meaning of the Greek verb is "to stand before a shop as a tradesman selling his goods," and so to pursue a particular calling. This leads to the translation given in the margin of our *Revised Version*: "profess honest occupations." There were many ways of earning a livelihood in the pagan world that were

Titus iii. 4–8.

absolutely forbidden to the Christian; on this supposition, the words mean that as one step towards living a truly Christian life, the Cretans should limit themselves to such occupations as were consistent with Christianity. It seems, however, to fit the general sense of the passage better, to take the words as having the wider reference. As the expression to the outer world of their Christian faith, they must see to it that they are constantly active in every variety of good work.

It is touching to note the reiterated emphasis that the aged Apostle lays on practical goodness, on Christianity as displayed in conduct. His message is not inopportune for the life of Christians to-day. There is often the tendency to be satisfied with a general average; to be content if our conduct conforms to the general practice of our environment; to re-echo the morality of the "man in the street" or the newspaper. St. Paul's words here are a trumpet-call to Christians not to follow, but to lead; to be ahead of the ordinary opinion and practice of the day; to apply the teaching and example of Christ to all the problems of social and political life. "Ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light."

XII

MATTERS TO BE AVOIDED

But shun foolish questionings, and genealogies, and strifes, and fightings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.—Titus iii. 9.

St. Paul has fully laid down the positive teaching on which "good works" can securely rest and be maintained. As a last word on the subject, he returns once again to the teaching to which he has already referred in chap. i. verses 10 and 14—teaching arising in Jewish circles in the Church. This must be avoided absolutely, because it is useless and profitless.

Titus iii. 9. Things to be avoided.

Foolish questionings mean investigations into subjects that have no bearing on the living of a good and upright life. **Genealogies** has a somewhat wider meaning than our corresponding English word. It includes, as we have already seen, legends about the patriarchs and other personalities of the Pentateuch which are to be found in such a writing as the Book of Jubilees. Research of this kind can only produce contention, and controversy about trivial legal points. They help no one and they lead nowhere. The Christian must keep entirely aloof from them.

XIII

TREATMENT OF THOSE WHO REFUSE ADMONITION

A man that is heretical after a first and second admonition refuse; knowing that such a one is perverted, and sinneth, being self-condemned.—Titus iii. 10–11.

Titus iii. 10–11.

The word translated **heretical** only comes here in the New Testament. It is connected, of course, with "heresy," which originally meant either a particular distinctive set of views, or the people who held them. Here the adjective "heretical" refers to the man who overpresses and over emphasises a particular truth, or group of truths, and teaches others to do the same, with the result that he creates a party or faction, and so breaks up the Church. It means, what was later indicated by the term "schismatic," a man who in the interests of his heresy creates an actual breach.

Refuse probably means, at the least, that he is to be excluded from all official recognition as a teacher. It is not quite clear whether it also implies exclusion from the Christian body. The word may be based on Our Lord's injunctures in St. Matt. xviii. 15–17. There may also be a reminiscence of the Jewish practice in accordance with which an offending

Rabbi, after two admonitions, if both passed unheeded, was excommunicated. **Titus iii. 10–11.**

Such a man can only do harm. He is **perverted,** that is, twisted aside out of the straight way. He **sinneth** because by his "heretical" conduct he tends to divide and weaken the body of his fellow Christians. He is **self-condemned.** It is not his fellow Christians who have condemned him, but he himself by his refusal to listen to repeated warnings. This emphatic and significant word has no known parallel and may have been coined by St. Paul to express his warning here.

XIV

MESSAGES AND FINAL SALUTATIONS

When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, give diligence to come unto me to Nicopolis: for there I have determined to winter. Set forward Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them. And let our *people* also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.

All that are with me salute thee. Salute them that love us in faith. Grace be with you all.—Titus iii. 12–15.

Titus iii. 12–15. Personal messages.

In accordance with St. Paul's general practice the letter closes with certain personal directions.

In the first place, he tells Titus that he proposes to send him a "relief" or "substitute." When the substitute has arrived Titus is, with all possible speed, to rejoin St. Paul.

The Apostle is not quite sure whether the substitute will be **Artemas** or **Tychicus.** The former name is probably an abbreviation for Artemidorus. Of this member of the Pauline circle we know nothing, but that he was helping St. Paul at this period of the Apostle's life. Tradition relates that he was one of the seventy disciples and the first bishop of Lystra. The name of Tychicus is more familiar to us. He is mentioned in Col. iv. 7, and we have already spoken of him there. He was one of St. Paul's most trusted and trustworthy fellow-

workers. **Nicopolis** was probably the town of that name in Epirus. It was a "strategic centre" for St. Paul. It was suitable as a base for missionary work in Dalmatia, and was conveniently placed for a journey to Rome. As St. Paul had determined simply to winter there, he may have regarded it as a stage on some further projected journey. **Titus iii. 12–15.**

We next hear that two other of the Pauline circle are intending to visit Crete, and the Apostle asks that all necessary courtesy and help be extended to them. **Zenas** is, again, a contraction for Zenodorus. The word **lawyer** *may* mean that he was a Roman lawyer, but more probably means that he was a Jew and a teacher of the law.

We know that **Apollos** had been both at Corinth and Ephesus. From this passage we learn simply that he was, at this time, in St. Paul's company. **Set forward** implies that Zenas and Apollos were merely passing through Crete, and making no prolonged stay.

And let our people also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful. In these words, **also** appears to have an emphatic position. It seems to mean: "Just as I have entreated *you* to show all necessary care to Zenas and Apollos, so also let the Cretan Christians generally be always ready to show practical kindness to passing fellow Christians." It may also contain a reference to the non-Christian community: "Let our people, as well as their pagan neighbours, be always zealous to perform the required duties of hospitality and friendly help."

Titus iii. 12–15.

To maintain good works for necessary uses. The former part of these words repeats the expression of iii. 8. We there saw that it was probably to be taken in a metaphorical sense with a wide reference. Here it may be used more particularly of filling a particular business or occupation, and the words "for necessary uses" indicate that the outcome of so fulfilling a suitable calling will be that they will both be in a position of independence themselves and able to help others as well.

That they be not unfruitful may possibly be a reference to the taunt which was beginning to be aimed at Christians that they were useless and unprofitable members of the body politic, because they kept aloof from so many trades. They are to work so well at those trades that are suitable for Christians that they can both maintain themselves and help others, and so effectively repel the slanders of their critics.

All that are with me salute thee. This general reference to his companions seems to show that Titus would know who were with St. Paul. As there is no reference to "the brethren," the inference may be that St. Paul was writing on a journey, and not during a stay at any Church.

Salute them that love us in faith. This greeting seems to be addressed more particularly to real friends, as distinct from false teachers, but **Grace be with you all** includes even those who could not be included in the more intimate greeting. His last word to the Cretan Church is one of inclusive love.